University of Alberta

THE FATE OF MENNONITES IN UKRAINE AND THE CRIMEA DURING SOVIET COLLECTIVIZATION AND THE FAMINE (1930-1933)

by

COLIN PETER NEUFELDT

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of History and Classics

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring 1999

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "THE FATE OF MENNONITES IN UKRAINE AND THE CRIMEA DURING SOVIET COLLECTIVIZATION AND THE FAMINE (1930-1933)" submitted by Colin Peter Neufeldt in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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To Lynette, Alexandra, Ella, Peter, Linda, and Abe

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the Soviet Mennonite experience in Ukraine and the Crimea during Soviet collectivization, dekulakization, and the famine between 1930 and 1933.

The first chapter of this dissertation provides a historical setting of Mennonite life in Tsarist Russia and during the first years of Soviet rule. It briefly examines the establishment of the Mennonite community in Ukraine and the Crimea and the Soviet regime's initial attempts to collectivize the Mennonite community in 1928 and 1929. There is also an analysis of Mennonite responses to early Soviet policies as well as the last-ditch efforts of thousands of Mennonites to emigrate to the West in the late 1920s.

What happened to Mennonites who were dekulakized between 1930 and 1933 is the focus of Chapter 2. More specifically, this chapter examines how dekulakization programs were administered in Mennonite-populated regions, the plight of Mennonite households that were disenfranchised and dispossessed of their property, the experiences of Mennonites who were imprisoned or forcibly moved onto kulak settlements, and the living conditions of Mennonites who were banished to exile camps across the Soviet Union. This chapter also sheds a revealing light on Mennonite participation in the dekulakization of their communities -- it investigates the extent to which Mennonites were recruited into Soviet agencies and the Communist party, and what roles they played in the exile and imprisonment of their coreligionists. There is also a discussion of the cost of dekulakization for Soviet Mennonite communities and whether their ethnic identity played a role in determining how severely the dekulakization process affected them.

How the Mennonite countryside was collectivized between 1930 and 1933 is analysed in Chapter 3. There is an examination of how Mennonite farmers were coerced into joining collective farms, and a description of their living and working conditions. The dissertation also explores how collectivization destroyed political, economic, social, and

religious institutions in Mennonite communities, how new Soviet institutions usurped control of Mennonite settlements, and how some Soviet Mennonites adapted quickly to the new political reality and obtained positions of influence within these new institutions. At the same time, this study proposes that Soviet collectivization had accomplished that which wars, revolutions, and government Russification programs had previously failed to do: it succeeded in forcing many Mennonites to abandon their traditional way of life, which had often isolated them from the surrounding Slavic countryside, and to integrate into the surrounding Ukrainian and Russian populations in an unprecedented manner.

What happened to Mennonites during the famine of 1932-1933 is addressed in Chapter 4. This section discusses the food shortages and grain expropriation campaigns experienced by collectivized Mennonites. It also examines the relief efforts of European and North American Mennonites, the work of B. H. Unruh, and the material aid provided by Hitler's government and German relief agencies that prevented the deaths of thousands of Soviet Mennonites. This work also challenges the applicability of the "genocide" theory to many of the regions populated by Mennonites. The thesis proposes that substantial financial and material aid from North America and Europe, high dekulakization rates in some villages, and the absence of actual famine conditions in other settlements, proved to be significant factors in contributing to the lower tallies of Mennonite deaths due to starvation than those often cited for the Ukrainian population. In short, this study proposes that: 1) many of the conclusions of the genocide theory do not apply to the Mennonite experience in 1932 and 1933; and 2) there was no "famine" per se in some Mennonite communities.

The final chapter summarizes the conclusions of the dissertation and also provides a discussion of the long-term ramifications of collectivization, dekulakization, and the famine on the political, economic, social, and religious institutions of the Soviet Mennonite community.

PREFACE

The story of what happened to the Mennonite community in the Soviet Union has too long been ignored by Western historians. While there are a few general histories on the topic, most ethnic Mennonite historians have not bothered to examine specific topics -- such as the effects of collectivization on the Soviet Mennonite community or Soviet-Mennonite collaboration with the Nazis during World War II -- in any detail; their reasons for not doing so were largely because Soviet archives were inaccessible or they were unable to read Russian and Ukrainian. As a result, the general level of knowledge concerning the Soviet Mennonite experience was limited at best, and there was a paucity of historical works that one could turn to for a more detailed and comprehensive analysis of specific periods in Soviet Mennonite history.

This dissertation is my attempt to fill in one of the gaping holes in our current understanding of Soviet Mennonite history. More than a decade ago, I began examining the Mennonite experience during Soviet collectivization while working on my Master's thesis -- which dealt with the Soviet Mennonite community in Ukraine and Crimea between 1927 and 1929 -- at the University of Alberta. This dissertation is a continuation of my MA thesis and examines how Soviet Mennonites in Ukraine and the Crimea reacted to full-blown collectivization and dekulakization from 1930 until 1933. It also discusses how Soviet Mennonites responded to the famine conditions which affected many regions of Ukraine and the Crimea in 1932 and 1933.

In an undertaking such as this, acknowledgments and thanks are due to a number of organizations and people who, in various ways, assisted me in the preparation of this dissertation. Funds from the Ivan Rudnytsky Memorial Doctoral Fellowship in Ukrainian History and Political Thought (University of Alberta), the Province of Alberta Graduate Scholarship, and the Department of History and Classics at the University of Alberta helped to make this study possible. I would also like to thank the partners of the law firm of Snyder & Company (Edmonton, Alberta) for granting me a leave of absence to conduct research in Ukraine. I am also grateful to the directors and staff at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Canada (Winnipeg, Manitoba), the Mennonite Heritage Centre (Winnipeg, Manitoba), the Library of Concord College (Winnipeg, Manitoba), the Library of the Canadian Mennonite Bible College (Winnipeg, Manitoba), the State Archive of the Zaporizhzhia Oblast (Ukraine), the Communist Party Archive of the Zaporizhzhia Oblast (Ukraine), the Central Communist Party Archive (Kiev, Ukraine), and the Central State Archive (Kiev, Ukraine). Their assistance in retrieving primary and secondary source materials for my research is very much appreciated.

Many colleagues and friends have also provided invaluable assistance in my work. I want to thank Robert Janzen, Henry (Hank) Dyck, Volodimir Hula, and Victoria Lohvin who provided assistance in the preparation of this manuscript. Heartfelt acknowledgments are also due to Alexander Tadeev, Pastor Paul Metlenko, Frank and Netti Dyck, Vadim Hetman, Andrei Wasilenko, and Ihor and Alona Sobovoi for their assistance in helping me to locate materials in Ukraine. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. John B. Toews, Dr. Harvey Dyck, the late Dr. George Epp, Dr. Harry Loewen, Dr. Bohdan Krawchenko, Dr. David Marples, and Dr. Zenon Kohut who generously shared their knowledge and provided invaluable information on various topics related to this study.

Finally, special thanks are due to a number of individuals who deserve special recognition. First, many thanks go out to my supervisor, Dr. John-Paul Himka, who has provided invaluable guidance and help to me since I first began my graduate studies more than a decade ago. His knowledge of Ukrainian and Russian history has inspired me from the first day that I met him, and he has prevented me from committing many errors in a field about which he knows much more than I will ever know. I am also very grateful to my parents and family who have been very patient and supportive while I have been completing this work. Most importantly, a special word of thanks is due to my wife, Lynette Toews-Neufeldt. She has not only encouraged and supported me throughout my graduate studies, but also made many personal sacrifices and provided invaluable assistance at every stage of the preparation of this dissertation. Her advice and comments have improved the dissertation immeasurably, but of course the responsibility for any mistakes and deficiencies is entirely mine.

Edmonton, Alberta
January 1998

Colin P. Neufeldt

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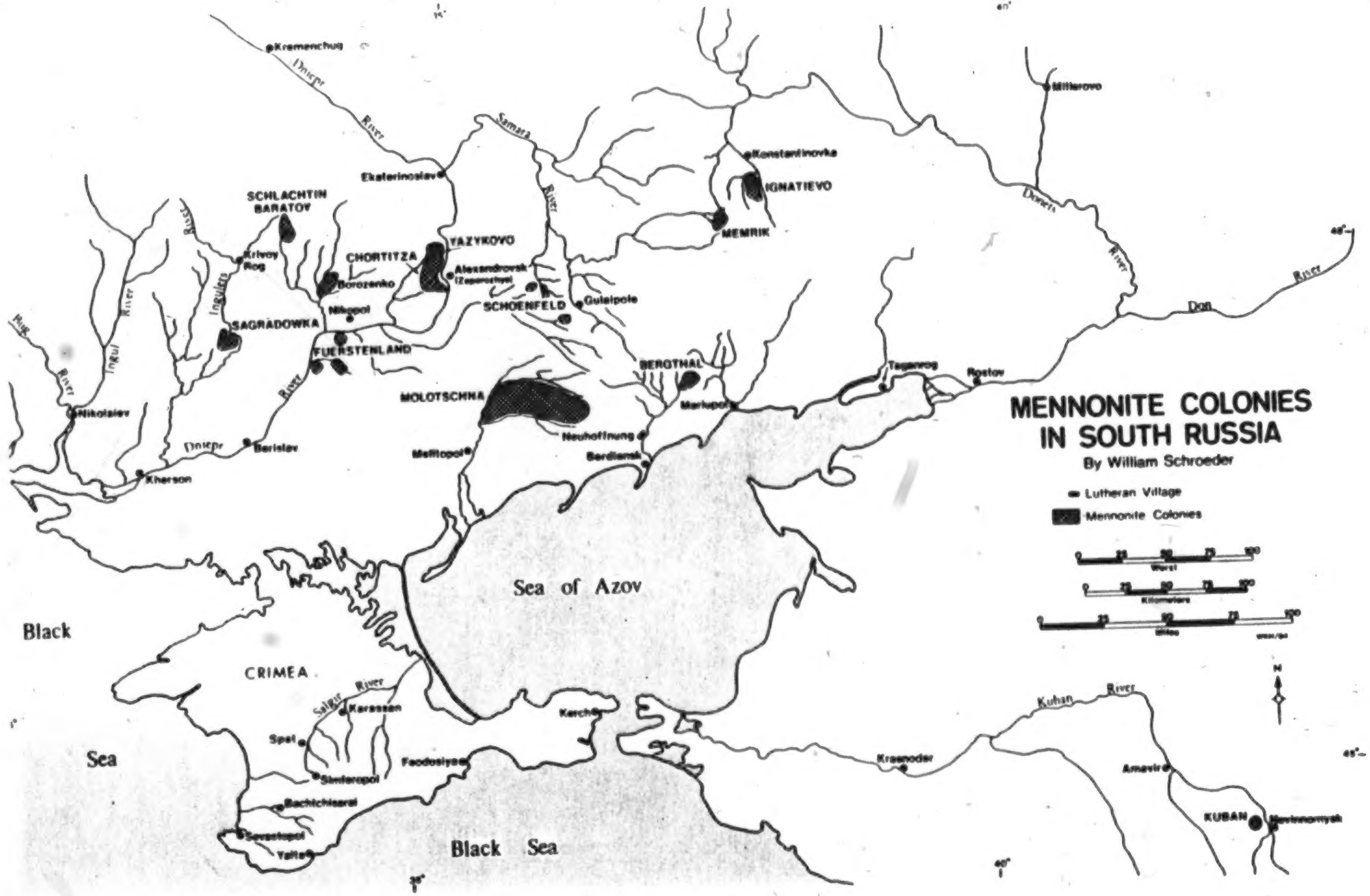
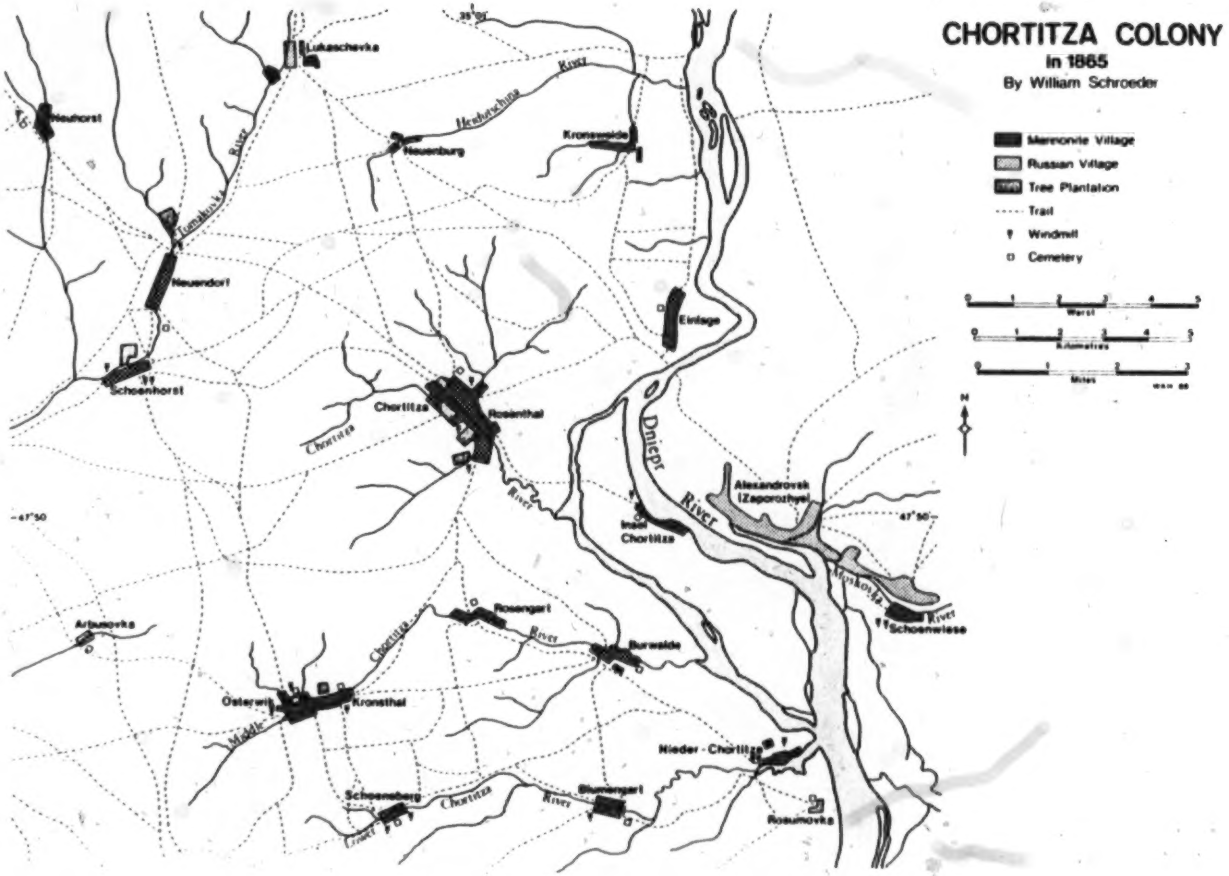


MENNONITE COLONIES
IN SOUTH RUSSIA
By William Schroeder

Lutheran Village
Mennonite Colonies
0 25 50 75 100
Werst
0 25 50 75 100
Kilometers
0 25 50 75 100
Miles
N
Kremenchug
Dniepr River
Samara River
Ekaterinoslav
SCHLACHTIN BARATOV
Krivoy Rog
Ingulets River
Ingul River
Bug River
CHORTITZA
Borozenko
YAZYKOVO
Alexandrovsk (Zaporozhye)
SCHOENFELD
Gulaipole
Nikopol
SAGRADOWKA
FUERSTENLAND
Nikolaiev
Berislav
Dniepr
Kherson
MOLOTSCHNA
Melitopol
Neuhoffnung
Berdiansk
BERGTHAL
Mariupol
Konstantinovka
IGNATIEVO
MEMRIK
Millerovo
Donets River
Don River
Taganrog
Rostov
Sea of Azov
Black Sea
CRIMEA
Salgir River
Karassan
Spat
Simferopol
Feodosiya
Kerch
Bachtchisarai
Sevastopol
Yalta
Krasnodar
Kuban River
Armavir
KUBAN
Nevinnomyssk
35°
40°
45°
48°



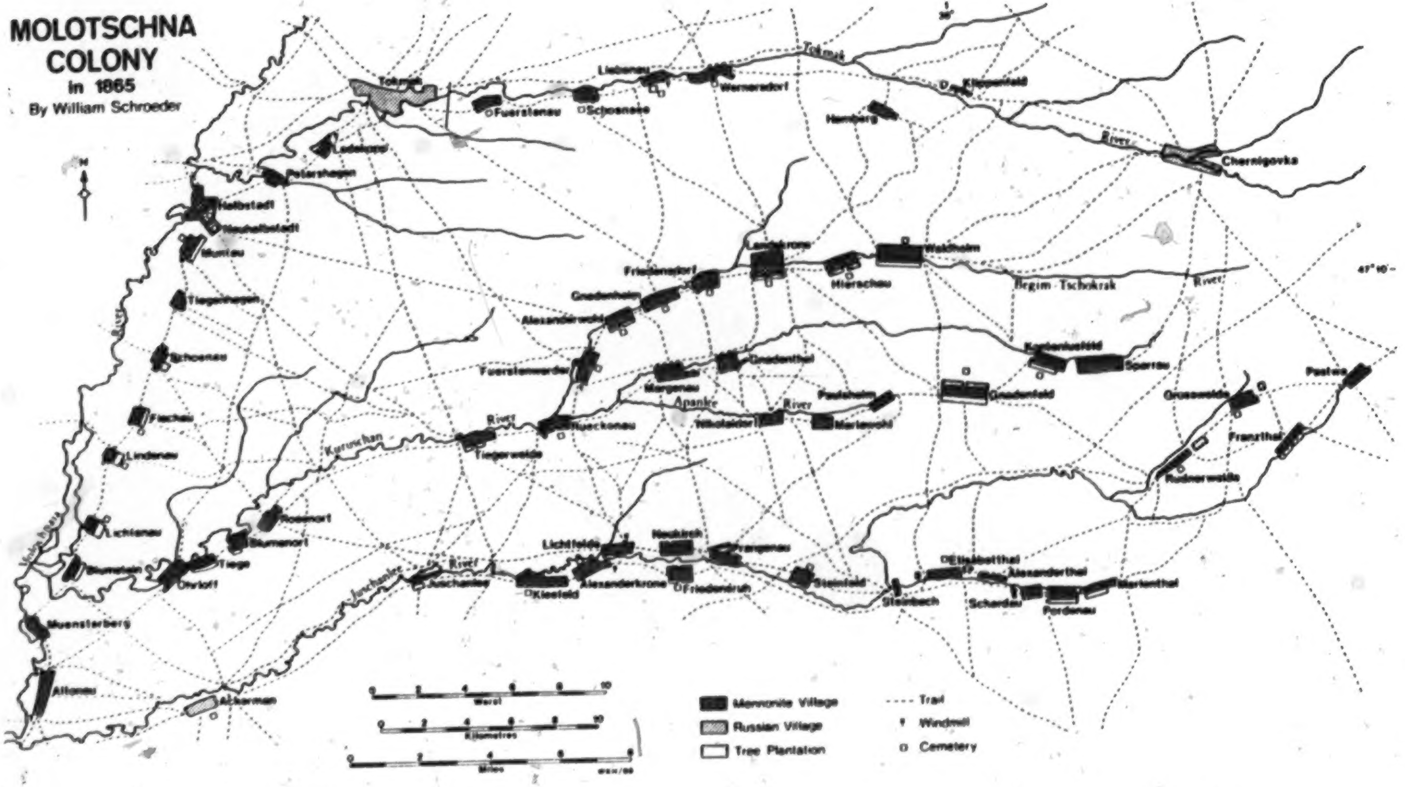
CHORTITZA COLONY

in 1865

By William Schroeder

Mennonite Village
Russian Village
Tree Plantation
Trail
Windmill
Cemetery
Werst
Kilometres
Miles
N
35°01'
47°50'
Lukaschevka
Neuhorst
Tomakovka River
Neuendorf
Schoenhorst
Heduhschina River
Neuenburg
Kronsweide
Einlage
Chortitza
Rosenthal
Chortitza River
Dniepr River
Insel Chortitza
Alexandrovsk (Zaporozhye)
Moskovka River
Schoenwiese
Arbusovka
Rosengart
Burwalde
Osterwik
Kronsthal
Middle Chortitza River
Nieder-Chortitza
Schoeneberg
Blumengart
Chortitza River
Rosumovka

MOLOTSCHNA COLONY
in 1865
By William Schroeder


N
Tokmak
Fuerstenau
Schoensee
Liebenau
Wernersdorf
Tokmak
Klippenfeld
Hamberg
River
Chernigovka
35°
Ladekopp
Petershagen
Halbstadt
Neuhalbstadt
Muntau
Tiegenhagen
Schoenau
Fischau
Lindenau
Lichtenau
Blumstein
Ohrloff
Tiege
Blumenort
Rosenort
Muensterberg
Altonau
Ackerman
River
Molotschna
Friedensdorf
Landskrone
Hierschau
Waldheim
Begim-Tschokrak
River
47°10'
Gnadenheim
Alexanderwohl
Fuersterwerder
Margenau
Gnadenthal
Paulsheim
Apanlee
River
Nikolaidorf
Mariawohl
Gnadenfeld
Konteniusfeld
Sparrau
Pastwa
Grossweide
Franzthal
Rudnerweide
Rueckenau
Kurutschan
River
Tiegerweide
Juschanlee
River
Juschanlee
Kleefeld
Lichtfelde
Alexanderkrone
Neukirch
Friedensruh
Prangenau
Steinfeld
Steinbach
Elisabeththal
Alexanderthal
Schardau
Pordenau
Mariental
0 2 4 6 8 10
Werst
0 2 4 6 8 10
Kilometres
0 2 4 6
Miles
Mennonite Village
Russian Village
Tree Plantation
Trail
Windmill
Cemetery

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

1 **archine**: 28 inches or 71.12 centimetres

1 **dessiatine**: 2.698 acres or 1.092 hectares

1 **double centner**: 1 quintal or 220.46 pounds or 100 kilograms

1 **faden**: 1 fathom or 6 feet or 1.829 metres

1 **fuder**: 1 cartload

1 **hectare**: 2.47 acres

1 **pood**: 36.1 pounds or 16.41 kilograms

Réaumur Scale: the thermometric scale in which the zero point corresponds to the temperature of melting ice and 80 degrees to the temperature of boiling water. For example, x degrees Réaumur = (5/4 x) degrees Celsius.

Degrees Réaumur		Degrees Celsius
80	=	100
40	=	50
8	=	10
0	=	0
- 8	=	-10
-16	=	-20
-24	=	-30
-32	=	-40
-40	=	-50

1 **verst**: 3,520 feet or 1.067 kilometres

1 **centner**: 110.23 pounds or 50 kilograms

1 **zoll**: 1 inch

ABBREVIATIONS and DEFINITIONS

AMLV -- Allrussischer Mennonitischer Landwirtschaftlicher Verein. The All-Russian Mennonite Agricultural Union.

CC -- The Central Committee (Центральный Комитет).

CC CP(b)U -- The Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine [Центральний Комітет Комуністичної Партії (більшовиків) України].

CEC -- The Central Executive Committee (Центральный Исполнительный Комитет).

CGWD -- Captured German War Documents. A collection of village reports prepared by "Kommando Dr. Stumpp," a special forces German commando unit which was established by "Der Reichsminister für die besetzten Ostgebiete" and which was stationed in Ukraine during the Nazi occupation between 1941 and 1943.

CMBS -- Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Canada in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

CP(b) U -- The Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine [Комуністична Партія (більшовиків) України or КП/б/У].

CVP -- Committee for the Village Poor (Сільський Комітет Незаможних Селян or СКНС).

ГАЗО -- Государственный Архив Запорожской Области / Державний Архів Запорізької Області. The State Archive in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine.

DB -- Der Bote. A weekly newspaper published by the Canadian Conference of Mennonites in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

DCC -- The District Control Commission of the Communist Party of Ukraine [Районна Контрольна Комісія КП(б)У].

DCFLU -- The District Collective Farm Livestock Union (Райколхозскотарсоюз).

DEC -- The District Expert Commission (Районні Експертні Комісії or РЕК).

DTC -- The District Tax Commission (Районна Податкова Комісія).

ECDS -- The Executive Committee of the District Soviet of People's Deputies (also known as the Районний Виконавчий Комітет [РВК], Районный Исполнительный Комитет [РИК], or Rayonsvollzugskomitee [RVK]).

ECRS -- The Executive Committee of the Regional Soviet of People's Deputies (Обласний Виконавчий Комітет).

Gosplan -- The State Planning Commission (Государственный плановый комитет or Госплан).

GPU -- The State Political Administration or internal security police (Государственное Политическое Управление).

KfK -- Kommission für Kirchenangelegenheiten. The Commission for Church Affairs.

Kolkhozcentre -- The Central Agency for Collective Farm Administration (Колхозцентр).

MHC -- Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

MR -- Die Mennonitische Rundschau. A weekly newspaper published by the Canadian Mennonite Brethren Conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

MRR -- Military Reserves in the rear (Тыл Ополченец).

MTS -- The Machine Tractor Station (Машинно Тракторная Станция).

NEP -- The New Economic Policy.

ОЗоКПУ -- Облпартархив Запорожского обкома КПУ. The Communist Party Archive in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine.

Politburo -- The Politburo (Political Bureau) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Политбюро ЦК КПСС).

RCVP -- The Regional Committee of the Village Poor (Комітет Незаможних Селян).

RLDC -- The Regional Land Division Committee (Райземвідділ or РЗ).

Sovnarkom -- The Council of People's Commissars (Совет Народных Комиссаров or Совнарком).

ST -- Stürmer. This was a weekly newspaper published in Chortitza, Ukraine. Copies of Stürmer are located in Государственный Архив Запорожской Область in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine.

ЦДАВОВ -- Центральний Державний Архів Вищих Органів Влади та Управління України. The State Archive in Kiev, Ukraine.

ЦДАГОУ -- Центральний Державний Архів Громадських Об'єднань України. The former Communist Party Archive in Kiev, Ukraine.

VBHH -- Verband der Bürger Holländischer Herkunft. The Union of the Citizens of Dutch Lineage.

WPIC -- The Workers and Peasants Inspection Committee (Робітниче Селянська Інспекця [РСІ] or Рабоче-Крестьянская Инспекция [РКИ]).

ZB -- Zionsbote. A weekly newspaper published by the North American Mennonite Brethren Conference in Hillsboro, Kansas.

Introduction

Mennonites are fascinated, if not obsessed with their own history. As the descendants of Dutch and German Anabaptists, Mennonites have made a point of documenting their past since the Reformation. This introspection has intensified over the past two decades, when the number of books and articles on Mennonite history in Europe and North America has mushroomed. The same is also true when it comes to the history of Mennonites in Ukraine and other parts of the former Russian empire. The topic continues to be the subject of numerous dissertations and scholarly works on everything from the development of Russian Mennonite agriculture and industry in the late 18th and early 19th centuries to the evolution of Mennonite hymnody in Mennonite congregations.[1]

If there is one notable exception to the extensive scholarly discussions of Mennonite history, it is the lacuna of historical works that deal with Mennonites in the Soviet Union. For many years, North American and European Mennonites who wanted to know what happened to their coreligionists in the USSR had very few sources of information to consult. Some occasionally received information from family members in the Soviet Union whose letters managed to make their way through the Soviet mail system to destinations in North America. Many of these letters were shared with the larger North American Mennonite community when they were published in Mennonite newspapers such as Die Mennonitische Rundschau, Der Bote, and Zionsbote in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Short biographies collected in Aron Töws' 2-volume work entitled Mennonitische Märtyrer provided a limited glimpse into the lives and experiences of Soviet Mennonites, as did biographies and village histories written and published by Soviet Mennonite emigres, many of whom had escaped from the USSR during and after World War II.[2]

There are only a handful of works on Soviet Mennonite history that have been written by professional historians. The majority of these works, many of which were written by the Mennonite historian John ~~B.~~ Toews, focus on the Mennonite experience during the Russian Revolution, the Civil War, and the New Economic Period. There are even fewer books that discuss what happened to Soviet Mennonites in the Stalinist era, and more particularly during collectivization, dekulakization, and the famine in the early

1930s. One of these works is Lawrence Klippenstein's, "Mennonite Pacifism and State Service in Russia: A Case Study in Church-State Relations: 1789-1936," a Ph.D. dissertation that examines Mennonite pacifism and nonresistance vis-à-vis the Czarist and Soviet governments, but which only deals with Soviet collectivization in the context of how it affected Soviet Mennonites in the alternative military service program. A very important general history of the Soviet Mennonite experience is Czars, Soviets, and Mennonites by John B. Toews. Based on biographies, letters, and memoirs, Toews' book includes 2 chapters that discuss what Soviet Mennonites experienced between the late 1920s and early 1940s, and provides an excellent overview of their common experiences of terror, loss, and tragedy.[3] Apart from these 2 works only a few articles have been published on this subject, all of which reiterate much of what is discussed in Czars, Soviets, and Mennonites.[4]

Together, these resources provided Mennonites in the West with the only written accounts of what happened to their Soviet coreligionists during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Because almost all of these resources were based on the personal and tragic accounts of Soviet Mennonites who had experienced great personal loss and suffering without retaliation, Mennonites in the West immediately came to regard all Soviet Mennonites as passive victims of Stalin and his Communist regime. In fact, some accounts go so far as to liken the Soviet Mennonite experience to the apocalyptic tribulation described in the Apostle John's Book of Revelation or that suffered by 16th-century Anabaptists who remained true to the faith despite terrible persecution and suffering. There is rarely any mention of Soviet Mennonites who failed to keep the faith or genuinely supported the policies of the Soviet state, and there is no serious discussion of the role, if any, that Soviet Mennonite bureaucrats played in the dekulakization of fellow Mennonites. With Mennonites in the West generally hearing the accounts from the victims of Soviet oppression, it is understandable why many regarded their coreligionists in the USSR as Mennonite martyrs of the 20th century.

The question that these long-held assumptions beg is whether this Western perspective on the Soviet Mennonite experience is entirely accurate? Is it correct to assume that the overwhelming majority of Soviet Mennonites were passive victims, if not martyrs for their faith? What actually happened in Mennonite communities during dekulakization, collectivization, and the famine? What is required to answer these questions is a more detailed, comprehensive account of what happened in Soviet

Mennonite communities during the late l920s and early 1930s which is based on materials available in the West as well as those recently made available in archives and libraries of the former Soviet Union.

Within the larger field of Soviet studies, the perspective of an ethnic minority such as the Mennonites on this period of Soviet history will also be of some benefit for a variety of reasons. First, there is a need for more historical accounts which focus on the perspectives of non-Slavic participants in Soviet collectivization. Although revisionist historians have succeeded in shifting the focus of Soviet collectivization away from the point of view of high politics (traditional Western historiography) to a point of view from below (i.e., peasants, kulaks, and local officials), the experiences, opinions, and policies of Slavic participants in Soviet collectivization have strongly influenced the overwhelming majority of traditional and revisionist interpretations on the period. These interpretations rely on materials that for the most part have been written by or are about the Slavic participants in Soviet collectivization. This is understandable given that the Slavic population was by far the largest in the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, however, there is often an implied assumption in many of these interpretations that the Slavic experience of collectivization is representative of what happened to all ethnic minorities caught up in Soviet collectivization. This writer, however, is not convinced that this is the only interpretative paradigm for understanding the Soviet countryside in the early 1930s; the experience of the Slavic population is not representative of the Soviet Mennonite experience or that of any other non-Slavic minority. In this respect, knowing what happened in Mennonite, German, Jewish, and other ethnic communities in the USSR in the early 1930s is important not only in order to determine how collectivization affected non-Slavic communities, but also in order to force historians to reevaluate some of the underlying assumptions in their own interpretive paradigms.

By focusing on the Soviet Mennonite community in Ukraine and the Crimea, this dissertation investigates how collectivization, dekulakization, and the famine affected the ordinary members of this non-Slavic, religious minority group. In doing so this study examines issues in Soviet Mennonite history which, to this writer's knowledge, have never been previously investigated. First, this work sheds a revealing light on Mennonite participation in the dekulakization and collectivization of their communities -- it investigates the extent to which Mennonites were recruited into Soviet agencies, the Communist party and the collective farms, what roles they played in the exile and imprisonment of their coreligionists, and their involvement in the collective farm hierarchy. There is also an analysis of how Mennonites were rewarded by the Soviet state for abandoning their religious lifestyle and the extent to which Soviet authorities trusted their Mennonite recruits to implement the government's collectivization programs. In examining the administrative bureaucracy of Soviet Mennonite communities during collectivization, this study tests and ultimately finds untenable the commonly held assumption that Mennonites were exclusively passive victims and martyrs of the Stalinist regime. Instead, it concludes that many Mennonites were also active participants in implementing the government's programs in the Mennonite countryside.

Second, by providing a non-Slavic perspective on the dekulakization process, this study offers new conclusions on the extent and severity of dekulakization in the Soviet Mennonite community in Ukraine and the Crimea compared to the surrounding Ukrainian community. One of the conclusions of this work is that ethnic identity was often an important factor in determining how severely the dekulakization process affected a particular region. Put more simply, this study contends that the cost of dekulakization in terms of human lives was generally higher in Soviet Mennonite communities in Ukraine and the Crimea than in the surrounding Slavic populations.

Third, this dissertation explores how dekulakization and collectivization destroyed political, economic, social, and religious institutions and hierarchies in the Mennonite community; it also discusses the role and policies of many of the new Soviet institutions and hierarchies that usurped control of the Mennonite communities. Although these new Soviet institutions were often very different in form, purpose, and philosophy than previous Mennonite institutions, many Soviet Mennonites adapted quickly to the new political reality and succeeded in obtaining positions of influence within these new institutions. At the same time, this study proposes that Soviet collectivization had accomplished that which wars, revolutions, and government Russification programs had previously failed to do: it succeeded in forcing many Mennonites to abandon their traditional way of life, which often isolated them from the surrounding Slavic countryside, and to integrate into the surrounding Ukrainian and Russian populations in an unprecedented manner.

Fourth, this work investigates the process of exiling enemies of the state during the early 1930s, a topic that is largely ignored in the historiography of Soviet collectivization. There is an examination of each step of the process that the Soviet government utilized to relocate thousands of Mennonites to resettlement camps, the work regimes of the Mennonite exiles, and the tribulations they encountered in their struggle to survive. What becomes apparent is that Mennonites established new communities with Russians, Ukrainians, and other ethnic groups while they were in exile. Of those Mennonites who were released from exile, only a few stayed back and continued to live within these new communities; most returned to their home villages or moved to other regions of the USSR to start a new life incognito.

Finally, this work challenges the applicability of the "genocide" theory -- which contends that the rise of Ukrainian national consciousness and Ukrainian resistance to collectivization so threatened the Soviet regime that it punished Ukrainians by creating famine conditions which led to the mass extermination of millions of Ukrainians in 1932 and 1933 -- to all regions of Ukraine, and particularly to many of the regions populated by Mennonites. While hunger and premature death from starvation and disease occurred in the Mennonite countryside in 1932 and 1933, the premature death toll in Mennonite communities appears to have been lower, and in some cases substantially lower, than in surrounding Ukrainian communities. This thesis proposes that substantial financial aid and numerous food parcels provided by Mennonites and relief agencies in North America and Europe proved to be a significant factor in contributing to the lower tallies of Mennonite deaths due to starvation than those often cited for the Ukrainian population. It also contends that other factors, high dekulakization rates in some villages and the absence of actual famine conditions in other settlements, contributed to lower death tolls in some Mennonite-populated regions. In short, this study proposes that: 1) many of the conclusions of the genocide theory do not apply to the Mennonite experience in 1932 and 1933; and 2) there was no "famine" per se in some Mennonite communities.

To accomplish these objectives, this dissertation incorporates materials that have long been available in North American and European archives and libraries. These include published and unpublished memoirs and biographies, letters published in Die Mennonitische Rundschau, Der Bote, and Zionsbote, village histories, and materials from the Captured German War Documents. What distinguishes this study from the handful of works that address this topic is that it includes published and unpublished materials found in the State and Communist Party archives in Kiev and Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine that have only recently been accessible to Western scholars. Many of these materials are soviet and collective farm protocols, Communist Party directives and protocols, local newspapers, and regional and All-Ukrainian government directives and orders.

A few editorial comments are also in order. With respect to place names, the German form of a place name preferred by the Mennonites has generally been used for those Mennonites settlements and colonies located in Ukraine and the Crimea. The text includes the name of the village followed by the name of the colony in parentheses. The village of Osterwick, for example, is identified as Osterwick (Chortitza) with "Chortitza" being the colony in which Osterwick is located. For most non-Mennonite villages and cities in Ukraine and the Crimea I have followed the spelling provided in the "Map and Gazetteer" of the Encyclopedia of Ukraine. Occasionally I referred to the Українська РСР. Адміністративно-територіальний поділ for assistance. In those cases where the name of a colony is used for the first time, or the name of a colony occurs infrequently in the text, the name of the colony is usually followed by the name of a nearby Ukrainian village or city, usually in square brackets, in order that readers may more easily identify the location of the colony. For example, the village of Georgstal in the colony of Fürstenland is identified as "Georgstal (Fürstenland [Rohachyk])" with Rohachyk being the name of a nearby Ukrainian community.

For all villages and cities that were outside Ukraine and the Crimea but still located in the USSR, I have used the spellings found in the National Geographic's "Russia and the Newly Independent Nations of the Former Soviet Union."[5] In a few cases where I could not track down the correct spelling of obscure place names such as exile settlements, I have left them as I found them in the sources.

Endnotes for the Introduction

1. James Urry, "Mennonite Economic Development in the Russian Mirror," in Mennonites in Russia: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz, ed. John Friesen (Winnipeg: Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1989), pp. 99ff; Wesley Berg, "Music among the Mennonites of Russia," in Mennonites in Russia: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz, ed. John Friesen (Winnipeg: Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1989), pp. 203.

2. Aron A. Töws, Mennonitische Märtyrer der jüngsten Vergangenheit und der Gegenwart (Clearbrook, British Columbia: By the Author, 1954); Jacob Rempel, Liebenau (Winnipeg: By the Author, 1977); Jacob Redekopp, Es war die Heimat: Baratow-Schlachtjin (Curitiba, Brasil: Ripografia Santa Cruz, 1966); J. Martens, So wie es war. Erinnerungen eines Verbannten (Winnipeg: John Froese and Gerhard Martens, 1963).

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4. John B. Toews, "Early Communism and Russian Mennonite Peoplehood," in Mennonites in Russia: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz, John Friesen ed., (Winnipeg: Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1989), pp. 265ff; John B. Toews "Documents on Mennonite Life in Russia, 1930-1940: Part I -- Collectivization and the Great Terror," American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, Work Paper 19 (September, 1975), pp. 3-12; John B. Toews, "Documents on Mennonite Life in Russia 1930- 1940: Part II -- Cultural and Intellectual Life," American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, Work Paper 20 (Spring, 1976), pp. 36-43; John B. Toews, "The Mennonites in the Early Soviet Period," Mennonite Life, 24 (1969), pp. 101ff.

5. "Map and Gazetteer," Encyclopedia of Ukraine, Volodymyr Kubijovyc, ed., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); В.І.Кирненко, Українська РСР. Адміністративно-територіальний поділ, (Kiev: 1973); "Russia and the Newly Independent Nations of the Former Soviet Union," National Geographic, William Graves, ed. (The National Geographic Society: March 1993).

Chapter I

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Commonwealth and Revolution: The Mennonite Community in Ukraine and the Crimea Prior to 1930

The Mennonite Commonwealth: From Catherine the Great to the Bolshevik Revolution

The Soviet Mennonites who experienced the turbulent years of collectivization and dekulakization in the late 1920s and early 1930s belonged to a community whose historical roots in Russian soil stretched back to the late 18th century. As the spiritual heirs of the Anabaptist leader Menno Simons (1496-1561) and as the descendants of pacifistic Dutch Anabaptists who immigrated to Prussia and Poland in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Mennonites immigrated to Ukraine in the late 1780's and early 1790's because of increasingly harsh economic and religious conditions that threatened their identity and future existence in Poland and Prussia. Special promises and favours from Catherine II -- including economic, educational, political, and religious privileges -- enticed Mennonites to immigrate to the steppes of Ukraine where they established self-sufficient colonies. The first colonies to be organized were the Chortitza colony (which surrounded Verkhnia Khortytsia in the Katerynoslav Province and which included approximately 15 villages) and the Molotschna colony (which included Molochans'ke in the Taurida Province and which consisted of approximately 58 villages). Improved economic conditions and a shortage of land in the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies motivated some Mennonites to establish daughter colonies in other regions of Ukraine as well as in the Crimea, the Caucasus, the Urals, Siberia, and south-central Asia in the middle of the 19th century. Some of the larger daughter colonies in Ukraine and the Crimea included the Bergthal (1836 [Respublika]), Crimean (1862), Fürstenland (1864 [Rohachyk]), Borozenko (1865 [Kamianka]), Schönfeld (1868 [Ternuvate]), Yazykovo (1869 [Lukashivka]), Schlachtin and Baratov (1871 [Sofiïvka]), Sagradowka (1871 [Arkhanhel's'ke]), Memrik (1885 [Selydove]), and Ignatievo (1888 [Dzerzhyns'ke]) settlements. By the early 1920s there were almost 80,000 Mennonites living in Ukraine and the Crimea and nearly 40,000 Mennonites in other regions of the USSR.[1]

Although the first years of pioneer life in Ukraine and the Crimea were extremely difficult for the Mennonite settlers, they eventually gave way to decades of economic prosperity. By the middle of the 19th century the Mennonites were active participants in transforming Ukraine into the breadbasket of Europe. The establishment of Black Sea ports, the introduction of a new system of crop rotation, and the European demand for Russian winter wheat encouraged Mennonite colonists to devote much of their time and energy to producing high-quality cereal crops and improving the genetic strains of their livestock herds.[2] The increasing demand for grain also encouraged Mennonites to develop a highly successful Mennonite agricultural machinery and implement industry in the 1850's and 1860's. By 1911 there were 8 Mennonite agricultural implement factories that produced 6.2% of the total output of agricultural machinery in Russia and 10% of the agricultural machinery manufactured in southern Russia. Remarkable success in the agricultural and industrial sectors enabled the Russian Mennonite community to develop a self-sufficient capitalist economy by the early 20th century -- an economy which rivalled and was often superior to the economies of the surrounding Ukrainian and non-Mennonite German settlements.[3]

The Mennonites' desire for economic self-sufficiency went hand in hand with their desire to develop an autonomous socio-political system with well-defined political, social, and religious mores. The colonies soon developed administrative bodies to deal with civic affairs, schools, taxation, roads, community projects, and the distribution of surrounding farm lands within their jurisdictions. The political hierarchy of the Mennonite colonies included village mayors, district superintendents, and the Fürsorge-Komitee für ausländische Kolonisten -- the Bureau of Colonization which was accountable to the Russian government for the activities of the Mennonite colonists. In the religious sphere it was the elders, ministers, and deacons who determined the spiritual direction of the Mennonite congregations. Although the Mennonite church had traditionally espoused egalitarian and democratic principles in ecclesiastical affairs, harsh pioneering conditions in Russia resulted in the emergence of a paternalistic, authoritarian religious leadership in some congregations. It did not take long for some of these authoritarian religious leaders to ally themselves with those in control of Mennonite political institutions; consequently, ecclesiastical and political interests soon became inextricably linked. By the last half of the 19th century, Mennonite religious and civic leaders single-handedly controlled almost all of the political, religious and social affairs of their communities, creating a "Mennonite Commonwealth" whose members were almost entirely of one ethnic background.[4]

The institutionalization of religious values and faith eventually took root in the

Mennonite settlements. While many Russian Mennonites still paid lip-service to the tenets of historic evangelical Anabaptism (pacifism, voluntary membership, separation of church and state, and an ethic of love), the practical expression of their faith was increasingly governed by ecclesiastical rules and regulations. Having abandoned many of the radical ideals of their Anabaptist forefathers by the middle of the 19th century, many Russian Mennonites had veered onto the pathway of creedalism and had adopted a *Volkskirche* (state-church) attitude towards ecclesiastical affairs that was commonplace in Lutheran and Catholic churches.[5] For some Mennonites, however, this attitude was impossible to stomach, and they rebelled against the growing institutionalization and politicization of the Mennonite church. They formed splinter groups, such as the *Kleine Gemeinde* (1814), the *Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde* (1860), the Mennonite Templars or Jerusalem Friends (1863), and the *Allianz-Gemeinde* (1905) as alternatives to the Mennonite church, which was seen as the defender of the status quo and the ongoing politicization of the Mennonite religious tradition.[6]

The Russian government's introduction of Russification and military service legislation in the 1860's and 1870's also threatened to disrupt the institutionalization of religious, political, and social values in many Mennonite settlements in Ukraine and the Crimea. These programs, which included providing Russian language instruction in Mennonite schools and redrawing the regional administrative boundaries in Mennonite jurisdictions, seriously threatened the privileged political, religious, and legal status of the Mennonites. By far the most threatening program was the government decree that introduced universal military conscription in 1870 and that was to apply to the pacifistic Mennonite population. Only protracted negotiations between Mennonite leaders and government officials resulted in a compromise in 1875 wherein the government permitted Mennonites to participate in an obligatory non-military state service program (alternative service) rather than the Russian military program. Financed by the Mennonite colonies, the alternative service program took the form of forestry work during times of peace. In the eyes of some Mennonites, however, the demand for greater participation in the affairs of the nation represented not only an unacceptable compromise of their religious conscience and historic pacifism, but also an antagonistic attempt by the Russian government to redraft the religious, political, and economic privileges that it gave to the Mennonites a century earlier. As a result, approximately 18,000 Mennonites (over 30% of all Russian Mennonites) immigrated to the United States and Canada between 1874 and 1880.[7]

The implementation of Russification and military service legislation did have some positive side effects in Mennonite communities, however. With the exodus of thousands of Mennonites to North America in the 1870's, land shortage problems in a number of colonies disappeared, and there was a significant increase in the standard of living for many of the colonies' inhabitants. In the decades preceding World War I this new-found wealth allowed for the establishment of an unprecedented number of educational, medical, and welfare institutions, including 400 elementary schools, 13 secondary schools, 2 teachers' colleges, 4 trade schools, a girls' school, a school for deaf-mutes, a business school, a Bible school, a psychiatric institution, a deaconess home, as well as several orphanages, hospitals, mutual aid agencies, and homes for the aged. The Russification and nationalization programs also prompted the Mennonite community to establish more positive social, cultural, and political links with the government and surrounding Ukrainian and Russian communities.[8] Paradoxically, however, at the very time when the Mennonite community was attempting to establish more ties with its Ukrainian and Russian neighbours, these populations began to exhibit an increasingly xenophobic, if not antagonistic attitude towards the Mennonites. By the beginning of the 20th century, pan-Slavic nationalists were publicly castigating Mennonite colonists for their alleged affiliations with Germany. At the same time, some Ukrainian and Russian peasants, dissatisfied with the privileged status and wealth of Mennonite landowners, perpetrated acts of violence against Mennonite colonists. What further inflamed anti-German and anti-Mennonite sentiments was Russia's entrance into World War I as Germany's opponent. Viewing the German-speaking minorities as "agents of the enemy," the czarist government enacted legislation in 1914 and 1915 which prohibited the use of the German language in the press and in public assemblies, and which called for the confiscation of Mennonite lands. Hostile public opinion also compelled Russian Mennonites to serve the country in war: approximately 6,000 Mennonites participated in the *Sanitätdienst* (a noncombatant medical service program in which Mennonites served as medics and orderlies) while another 6,000 Mennonites worked in the forestry service program.[9]

Revolution, Civil War and Famine

Despite their enormous contributions in the medical corps and forestry programs during World War I, Mennonites continued to be the object of anti-German hostilities and attacks after the overthrow of the czarist government and the establishment of the

Provisional Government in Petrograd (March 1917) and the Central *Rada* in Ukraine (April 1917). The situation became worse following the seizure of power by Lenin and his Bolsheviks in November 1917. For Lenin, the Bolshevik Revolution represented the supremacy of soviet power in the country -- an alliance between and dictatorship of the working class proletariat and the peasantry in an effort to bring about a working class revolution not only in Russia's cities and towns, but also in its backward, agrarian countryside. To accomplish this, the Bolsheviks established village soviets (councils of workers and peasants) and the Committees of the Village Poor (CVP) whose mandate was to assist government in the forced requisitioning of grain from wealthy landowners, kulaks (capitalist farmers who had exploited the poor), and other enemies of the people, and deliver it to the starving workers in the cities and soldiers in the army. The Bolsheviks hoped that the actions of the village soviets and CVP would unite the poorer peasantry in a class war against the wealthier elements of the countryside and anyone else who acted contrary to the policies of the Communist party. In many Mennonite-populated regions in Ukraine, the village soviets and CVP were under the control of indigent peasants, urban activists working in the countryside, and lawless elements whose grain requisitioning forays in the late fall of 1917 were overt attempts to redress perceived past wrongs and eradicate any vestiges of a Mennonite commonwealth in the area.[10] Although these forays seldom produced much grain for the government (in most cases the peasants had no desire to relinquish grain which they believed was rightfully theirs), it did result in a reign of violence and murder in a number of Mennonite settlements, and marked the beginning of a class war against local Mennonite landowners.

What brought some relief from this reign of terror was the advance of the Austrian and German armies into Ukraine and the Crimea in the spring of 1918. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 1918) entitled Austrian and German troops to occupy various regions of Ukraine and the Crimea, and to provide military support to the fledgling Ukrainian Hetmanate of Pavlo Skoropadsky that emerged in April 1918. Warmly welcomed by the Mennonite colonists, the Austrian and German forces summarily dissolved the newly established Bolshevik soviets and Committees of the Village Poor and restored peace and order in many colonies.[11] The presence of the German troops in the Mennonite communities also encouraged an unprecedented spirit of militarism among some Mennonites who took advice and equipment from the German troops and who subsequently organized their own *Selbstschutz* (self-defence corps) in a number of settlements. Although some Mennonite clergymen condemned the formation of these armed paramilitary units as a violation of the historical Mennonite peace position, their oral and written pleas for moderation and repentance were ignored by those who were prepared to use force to defend their families and property.[12]

The defeat of Germany and Austria at the end of World War I and the eventual withdrawal of German and Austrian troops in the fall of 1918 left a power vacuum in Ukraine and the Crimea. Although various groups, such as the Ukrainian Directory, the Bolsheviks, and the White Army, each vied for military dominance in Ukraine and the Crimea, none could retain control of these regions for very long during the years of Civil War (1918-1922). Without any dominant political force in Ukraine or the Crimea, lawless brigands and anarchists such as Nykyfor Hryhoriiv and Nestor Makhno endeavoured to fill the vacuum by exerting political and military control over local inhabitants. In a number of regions heavily populated by Mennonites, for example, Makhno's partisans relied on terror and violence -- including raping and murdering Mennonite colonists, pillaging their possessions, and burning their homes -- to assert political hegemony over the colonies. In November of 1919, for instance, Makhno's troops killed approximately 240 Mennonites in the Sagradowka colony alone.[13] Although a large number of Mennonite colonists remained loyal to their pacifistic beliefs and did not defend themselves against Makhno's reign of terror, some Mennonites took up arms against the partisans. Collaborating with the White Army and militia groups organized by German-Lutheran and -Catholic colonies, Mennonite *Selbstschutz* troops actively resisted Makhno's troops in the winter of 1918-1919. The Mennonite militia units were successful in defending their villages against the anarchists until the Bolsheviks' Red Army joined forces with Makhno's troops in a bid to eradicate White Army strongholds in Ukraine in the spring of 1919. When Mennonite militia units learned of this united effort on the part of Makhno and the Red Army most disbanded after recognizing that they could not successfully take up arms against government troops. This act of surrender did not pacify Makhno, however. Seeking to revenge the deaths of comrades who were the victims of Mennonite militia activities, Makhno's troops attacked Mennonite communities that had actively supported the *Selbstschutz* and imprisoned and executed large numbers of *Selbstschutz* participants.[14]

Makhno's terror finally came to a halt in January of 1920 when the Red Army began to drive his troops out of Ukraine and the Crimea. The absence of Makhno's partisans, however, did not mean an immediate end to the reign of terror. As carriers of syphilis, malaria, cholera, and typhus, Makhno's troops infected the Mennonite women that they raped and the Mennonite families from whom they demanded food and lodging. In the Chortitza colony, for example, more than 1,500 Mennonites died of typhus during the winter of 1919-1920. The Mennonite colonies also suffered from the ravages of the Civil War, since a significant number of Mennonite settlements were located in the middle of the battlegrounds between the Red and White armies.[15] When the Bolsheviks eventually gained control of Ukraine and the Crimea at the end of 1920, the period of bloodshed and destruction was followed by many months of drought, famine, and starvation. A devastating drought affected vast regions of Ukraine and the Crimea in the spring of 1921 and precipitated famine conditions of unprecedented proportions that continued until the autumn of 1922. Hundreds of Mennonites starved to death. What staved off further starvation deaths was the assistance of coreligionists in North America. In response to the pleas for aid, North American Mennonite churches organized a new Mennonite relief agency -- the Mennonite Central Committee -- which sent food, clothing, medical supplies, and tractors to the famine-stricken regions. This North American Mennonite relief agency provided food to approximately 75,000 people, including 60,000 Mennonites.[16]

The New Economic Policy: 1921-1927

The Civil War and famine had left the fledging Bolshevik state in economic turmoil and social disarray. The government's policy of forced grain requisitions during the Civil War had alienated not only so-called kulaks, but also the vast majority of the poor and middle peasantry. Although Lenin stated at the outset of the Civil War that within the peasantry only the kulak was the enemy of the state, widespread peasant resistance during the Civil War compelled the Bolsheviks to broaden the definition of "kulak" to include anyone (including middle and poor peasants) who participated in political activity that was contrary to Soviet policy or who refused to surrender their grain to state officials. By the end of the Civil War, peasant uprisings in Ukraine and Siberia, workers revolts in many urban areas, and the revolt of sailors of the Kronstadt naval base (the long-time allies of the Bolsheviks) in 1921, made it clear to the Soviet government that it was completely out of favour with many peasants, workers, and soldiers.

To prevent any further erosion of popular support and to ensure the continued existence of Soviet power, Lenin announced at the 10th Congress of the Communist Party (March 1921) that his government would abandon many of its previous Civil War policies (including grain requisitioning programs) and embark on a New Economic Policy (NEP). The main tenets of NEP, which represented a conciliatory gesture to an antagonistic, rebellious peasantry, included replacing grain requisition campaigns with moderate taxes, legalizing private trade, allowing banks and private industries to operate without much government interference, and allowing limited forms of capitalistic enterprises to flourish. Such conditions, Lenin hoped, would allow backward, peasant Russia to industrialize, foster a *smychka* (worker-peasant alliance) that would enable socialism to take hold in the countryside, and ensure the survival of the Soviet government and an international proletarian revolution.[17]

For many members of the Bolshevik government, NEP represented a conciliatory gesture to the peasantry -- an opportunity to grant limited economic concessions to a peasantry who had come to despise its political leaders. The government believed that by allowing the grain trade to flourish and providing more state-manufactured products on the market place, the peasantry would financially support the country's industrializations plans by selling its grain to the state and purchasing these manufactured goods. To the chagrin of Bolshevik leaders, the peasantry did not behave according to plan. Although NEP provided more favourable economic conditions for the peasantry to sell its grain, the Civil War experience, the profound distrust of the government, and the ongoing demands for and occasional forced requisitions of grain by local officials provided little incentive for the peasantry to cooperate with the regime; peasants were more interested in withholding grain to meet their own families' needs than in selling it to the state at below-market prices and purchasing state-manufactured goods that they did not want or could not use. This was especially evident during the "scissors crisis" in 1923-1924. In 1923 the government charged peasants higher prices for manufactured goods and paid them less for their agricultural products in the hope that this would create more revenue for the country's industrialization programs. The peasants responded by withholding their grain from the marketplace, which subsequently forced the government to decrease the price for manufactured goods and increase the price that it paid for agricultural produce and grain. This pricing policy, however, impeded industrial growth over the next few years, resulted in a shortage of available consumer goods for peasants, and failed to attract more peasant grain to the marketplace. The pricing policy also aroused a much-heated debate within the highest ranks of the Soviet government. Some government leaders, such as E. A. Preobrazhensky, a spokesman for the Left Opposition, were vehemently opposed to granting such concessions to the peasantry, arguing that the peasants' hoarding of grain and demands for even higher grain prices held the country hostage and prevented further industrial development. Instead of granting further concessions, Preobrazhensky contended, a process of "primitive socialist accumulation" must occur wherein the terms of trade are used against the peasantry and the government requisitions more grain from the countryside to speed up the industrialization process. On the other hand, N. Bukharin, the leader of the Right Opposition, feared that primitive socialist accumulation would lead to widespread peasant opposition to the government, endanger any further development of a *smychka* between the peasantry and workers, and compound the problem of peasants withholding their grain from the marketplace. Bukharin contended that to not grant such concessions to a peasantry that was still trying to recover from the Civil War could seriously threaten the continued existence of the Soviet Union.[18]

While there was ongoing debate within the Bolshevik leadership as to whether the policies of NEP ought to be broadened even further or discontinued altogether, the introduction of NEP did not come too soon for the Mennonite community in Ukraine and the Crimea. Although the community had survived years of war, revolution, anarchy, disease, and famine, it had also lost thousands of its members to premature death and millions of rubles in property and possessions. It also lost some of its young men to the Red Army, which had forcibly drafted Mennonite men since 1921. By the end of the Civil War, the Mennonite community was also in a very precarious political position vis-à-vis the new Bolshevik regime; the community's prerevolutionary wealth and privilege, use of the German language, resistance to assimilation, refusal to take up arms in World War I, formation of paramilitary militia units during the Civil War, and collaboration with the German, Austrian, and White Armies earmarked most Mennonites as disloyal kulaks in the eyes of Bolshevik authorities. To improve the community's relationship with the government, Mennonite religious and political leaders organized an all-Mennonite conference in Alexanderwohl (Molotschna) in February 1921 to determine the best way for the community to safeguard its economic and religious independence, regain its military exemption status, and demonstrate to the government its willingness to participate in the economic reconstruction of war-torn, famine-stricken Ukraine. The Mennonite delegates also created the Verband der Bürger holländischer Herkunft (Union of Citizens of Dutch Lineage or VBHH) which, under the leadership of B. B. Janz and Phillip Cornies, obtained a wide array of economic concessions from the Bolshevik government for the 65,000 Mennonites living in Ukraine.

Within a short period of time other Mennonite organizations, such as the Allrussischer Mennonitischer Landwirtschaftlicher Verein (All-Russian Mennonite Agricultural Union or AMLV) and the Halbstädter Menn. Landwirt. Koop. Kredit-Genossenschaft (Halbstadt Mennonite Agricultural Cooperative and Credit Association) were organized to obtain additional economic and political concessions from the government.[19]

For both the VBHH and the AMLV the key issue in their negotiations with the Bolsheviks in the 1920s centred around Mennonites retaining ownership of their land holdings. What resulted from these negotiations was less than satisfying for most Mennonites. After protracted talks in 1921 and 1922, the government advised that Mennonites would receive no privileged landholding concessions, the maximum size of a parcel of land for each Mennonite family would be no larger than 32 dessiatines, and Mennonite colonies with moderate to large land holdings would be required to surrender land to landless Mennonites, Ukrainians, and Russians. The upshot of these government policies meant that between 50% and 75% of all Mennonite land would be transferred to landless peasants.[20]

Not surprisingly, the Bolsheviks' land reallotment program posed a threat to many Mennonites' agricultural way of life, economic security, and sense of identity. They viewed the surrender of their land to local peasants as an overt attempt by the government to punish the Mennonites for their actions during the Civil War and to force them to assimilate into the surrounding Ukrainian and Russian populations. What also aroused consternation in the Mennonite settlements was the passage of a new military law in September 1925. This law provided that local courts, not government agencies, would determine which Mennonite men would be exempted from military service and allowed to participate in the alternative service program. The law did not guarantee, however, that Mennonites involved in the alternative service program would never participate in military-related activities. As a result, some Soviet district judges routinely drafted young Mennonite men into the army without giving any consideration to their pleas for exemption.[21] In the eyes of many Mennonites, the government's enactment of new military laws and the land reallotment program constituted a direct attack on the Mennonites' historic privileges of religious liberty and freedom of conscience (particularly as it related to non-resistance), and motivated many to explore the possibility of emigrating from the Soviet Union.

The agency that was chiefly responsible for investigating, negotiating and facilitating a mass migration of Mennonites from the USSR was the VBHH. Working together with

AMLV officials, the leaders of the VBHH prepared the necessary paperwork and obtained the passports and other documentation from the government that the Mennonite emigration applicants required. In the 6-year period between July of 1923 and April of 1928, 17,889 Mennonites were allowed to emigrate from the Soviet Union. By December of 1929, almost 23,000 Mennonites (approximately 25% of the Mennonite population) had left the USSR. Many more Mennonites were prepared to leave the country, but government restrictions on emigration made it very difficult for applicants to acquire passports after 1926. Although a small number of Mennonites who were permitted to emigrate found their way to Mexico, the overwhelming majority moved to Canada.[22]

For those Mennonites remaining in the USSR, their religious and economic privileges were increasingly curtailed by a Soviet government which took steps to close down Mennonite cultural and economic institutions, and harassed Mennonite leaders still living in the country. In the late fall of 1925, for instance, the government sought to reorganize and weaken the VBHH as an act of retaliation for its overzealous involvement in emigration matters. Later in 1926 the agency was practically dissolved and many of its leaders were eventually imprisoned or exiled. A similar fate befell the AMLV, which was dissolved in the summer of 1928. Other targets of government oppression included Mennonite clergymen (some of whom were already imprisoned or exiled in 1927) and Mennonite periodicals (such as Unser Blatt and Der Praktische Landwirt, which were forced to cease publication in 1928). These direct and indirect attacks on Mennonite privileges, institutions, and leaders had severely crippled the Mennonite community by the end of 1927, leaving it vulnerable to further government initiatives in the years to come.[23]

Setting the Stage for Collectivization: 1927-1929

The government's antagonistic attitude toward the Mennonites was partially due to the worsening economic and political circumstances of the nation in late 1926 and 1927. In an effort to speed up the pace of industrialization, for instance, the government in 1926 lowered grain prices by 20%, imposed higher taxes on wealthier kulak peasant households, and increased political and physical persecution of the more efficient kulak farmers. These policies, however, compelled most peasants to withhold their grain from the marketplace and resulted in a significant decrease in government grain procurements from the countryside. Low grain prices, a nation-wide shortage of available consumer goods, and widespread fear of war and foreign military intervention compelled the peasantry to continue hoarding their grain in 1927. The result was spiralling food prices, food rationing, and long queues for food for those living in urban centres.[24] The grain crisis and war scare also created a backlash against the peasantry by town dwellers, factory workers, and urban activists who interpreted the peasant hoarding of grain as a deliberate attempt by the countryside to starve and punish the urban centres. For a growing number of those in the Soviet leadership -- particularly those who supported the policies of Joseph Stalin -- the peasantry's actions were inspired by kulaks and foreign enemies of the Soviet Union who sought to sabotage the nation's industrialization efforts, destroy its military defences, and undermine its proletarian government. The Stalinist contingent complained that if action was not taken immediately, an urban famine would engulf the cities and towns resulting in *razmychka* (the destruction of the *smychka*) between the peasantry and the working class. To prevent this from happening, it would be necessary to place the interests of the working class above those of the peasantry and destroy those elements in the countryside which opposed the dictatorship of the proletariat and prevented socialism from taking root. Stalin and his supporters said it was now time for the immediate discontinuance of NEP, the rapid industrialization of the nation, and the imposition of severe, maximalist policies (such as forced grain requisitions) on those sectors in the countryside which refused to cooperate and deliver grain to the government.[25]

Stalin's plans for accomplishing these objectives became known soon after the 15th Party Congress in December 1927. After announcing proposals for the first 5-Year Plan and excommunicating some of the Left (Trotskyite-Zinoviev) Oppositionists from the Party, Stalin and his supporters called for the immediate implementation of emergency measures to increase the dangerously low reserves in the nation's storage bins. Theoretically these measures (which were collectively referred to as the "Ural-Siberian Method") were only to be used for the purpose of expropriating kulak grain; in reality, however, they affected all levels of the peasantry and were reminiscent of the measures used during the days of War Communism between 1919 and 1921. To carry out these measures, thousands of party activists and factory workers were deployed into the grain producing territories of the Soviet Union in the early months of 1928. These activists and workers, who were empowered to wield authority at the local village level, organized grain expropriation campaigns (particularly in January, February, and March 1928), closed down the local grain markets, and prosecuted peasants and private traders suspected of hoarding grain under Article 107 of the Criminal Code. The government also implemented other extraordinary measures, such as dramatic increases in taxes, to siphon off surplus money from the peasantry. Although Stalin put a temporary halt to the emergency measures in April of 1928 because of opposition from Bukharin and the Right Oppositionists who argued that the emergency measures were destroying the *smychka* and undermining Soviet power, he reimposed these measures in 1929 when the peasantry again refused to deliver grain to government representatives.[26]

It became increasingly clear to Stalin that the only resolution to the ongoing grain crisis required the collectivization of the peasantry. He contended that the peasantry had to contribute more to the nation's industrialization and military programs, and the most effective and efficient method way of accomplishing this was through the establishment of some 240,000 collective farms and state farms across the country. Not all peasants, however, would automatically be entitled to collective farm memberships. All kulaks and some middle peasants who had participated in wrecking and saboteur activities against the state would have to be removed from the countryside to prevent kulak infestation of the collective farm system. Moreover, the organization of large-scale socialized farming would not occur in a vacuum, but would be synchronized with the government's First 5-Year Plan (approved in April 1929) -- a utopian plan of unrealistic grain and agricultural produce production that was based on perfect economic conditions, 5 good harvests, a strong international market for grain, and no costly military expenditures. Some regions, and in particular Ukraine, would immediately have to become an example of how to collectivize peasant households successfully in a very short period of time. To provide the impetus required to collectivize such large regions of the Soviet Union immediately, the government recruited thousands of skilled workers, Civil War veterans, and Communist Party members -- referred to as the 25,000ers -- in December of 1929 and sent them off into the countryside to use whatever means necessary to drive the peasantry into the collective farms. Frequently ill-informed about agriculture and local village conditions, the 25,000ers were given authority to forcibly compel peasants to relinquish their personal property, livestock, farm machinery, and land for the benefit of local collective farms.[27]

The implementation of the First 5-Year Plan, the emergency measures used to procure surplus grain, and the arm-twisting tactics employed to coerce peasants to join collectives did not occur without resistance. Already in 1928 the peasantry no longer trusted the government and showed its disapproval of the government's emergency measures by sowing less grain, liquidating some of its livestock and machinery, and committing acts of violence against local authorities. To quell this upsurge of peasant resistance, government representatives were encouraged to incite class hatred within the villages, inciting poorer peasants to turn against their wealthier neighbours who were castigated as kulaks and responsible for the nation's economic and political problems. They also arrested those peasants whom they regarded as enemies of the state. After Stalin announced in late December of 1929 that the kulak was the archenemy of the state and must be liquidated as a class, the government launched an all-out war against the countryside in an effort to forcibly drive millions of peasants into collective farms.[28] A new era of mass terror and oppression had begun where arrest, exile, and execution became the order of the day.

Dealing with the Mennonites (1927-1929)

The measures that the Soviet government took between December 1927 and December 1929 to resolve the grain crisis and initiate the collectivization process had a profound impact on everyone living in the Soviet countryside, including Mennonites in Ukraine and the Crimea. As in almost every region of the Soviet Union, the reverberations of Stalin's announcement in December of 1927 that he intended to use emergency measures for procuring grain were felt immediately by the Mennonite communities.[29] In the first 3 months of 1928, for example, a number of grain expropriation campaigns were undertaken in Mennonite settlements. Since most government representatives and activists viewed the Mennonites as members of the wealthy kulak class, their grain reserves were often the first to be expropriated, often at ridiculously low prices. Those Mennonites who refused to comply with the expropriators' demands often had their grain confiscated without any compensation.[30] The grain expropriation campaigns depleted much of the surplus Mennonite grain by the fall of 1929, and in some settlements most of the grain required for human consumption and sowing next year's crop had also been taken. Mennonite farmers who were unable to supply the grain demanded by the local authorities were often fined stiff penalties and ordered to buy grain from private speculators at exorbitant prices and then sell it to local officials at rock-bottom prices. Some of those who failed to meet their quotas were arrested and imprisoned, and their property was confiscated and sold.[31]

The government also used taxes to solve the grain problems of 1928 and 1929. Mennonite land holdings were repeatedly and often arbitrarily reassessed by local officials in order to multiply the taxation revenue obtained from their alleged kulak owners. In some cases property taxes were increased four- and fivefold without any explanation.

Government representatives and activists also assessed a barrage of additional taxes, such as the self-tax (used to supplement the cost of local agricultural, social, and educational programs), and ordered many Mennonites to purchase obligatory state bonds and loans (the proceeds of which were used to finance the collectivization programs among other things). The taxation measures employed by the Soviet regime during this time were so harsh that the familiar catch phrase "the kulak was to be exterminated not by the club but by the ruble" soon came to accurately reflect the economic fate of Mennonite landowners.[32] Mennonite farmers and proprietors, however, were not the only victims of the government's burgeoning income and property taxes. Mennonite preachers, lay preachers, and those who worked for the Kommission für Kirchenangelegenheiten (Commission for Church Affairs or KfK) were also singled out as valuable sources of revenue to be tapped, and their income and property taxes increased significantly in 1928 and 1929. One reason for their high tax assessment was that the government characterized a clergymen's economic subsistence as being capitalist in nature; that is, the income of a clergyman was attained by exploiting and benefiting financially from the economic vulnerabilities of the poor. Although many local congregations rallied around their ministers and helped them to pay their taxes, some congregations could not afford to pay them, and watched helplessly as government officials confiscated the property and land of their ministers. Some of those who were unable to meet their taxes had no choice but to sell their livestock, machinery, and property in order to pay their assessments; others were summarily arrested, imprisoned, or sentenced to long terms of forced labour.[33]

Escalating taxes and grain expropriation campaigns in 1928 and 1929 also initiated a period of privation and hunger in a number of Mennonite communities. As early as the spring of 1928, grain shortages resulted in long queues of hundreds of people waiting to purchase their daily quota of bread in Mennonite villages such as Schönwiese (Chortitza) and Sergejewka (Fürstenland [Rohachyk]). In other communities such as Gnadenfeld (Molotschna), Steingut (Sagradowka), Osterwick (Chortitza), Konteniusfeld (Molotschna), and Sofiïvka (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]), the ravages of poverty and hunger left some Mennonites to beg for their food and others to die on the streets.[34]

Government representatives and activists also saw to the disenfranchisement of many Mennonites who were branded as kulaks and enemies of the state. Disenfranchisement, which usually occurred in conjunction with other penalties such as confiscation of property, imprisonment, and exile, was not merely a deprivation of the right to vote and participate in the *skhod* (local village meetings); it was tantamount to a deprivation of the right to make a living. Disenfranchisement prevented Mennonites from obtaining employment, lodging, food rations, and medical services. Those who were disenfranchised were usually required to pay higher taxes, were prohibited from joining collective farms, and in some instances, were not allowed to send their children to school. By 1929 disenfranchisement was no longer a form of punishment reserved only for Mennonite kulaks and clergymen, but was applied to Mennonites of all social ranks.[35]

The increasing incidence of disenfranchisement in Mennonite communities coincided with government-sponsored antireligious campaigns in 1928 and 1929. New government regulations restricting churches and their operation, as well as the government's ardent atheistic propaganda campaigns put a great deal of economic, political, and social pressure on the Mennonite congregations, and particularly Mennonite ministers, lay-ministers, elders, and song leaders. Besides disenfranchising the Mennonite religious leaders and "taxing them to death," the government representatives and activists prohibited Mennonite ministers from practising itinerant evangelism, confiscated and auctioned off the property of those ministers who were unable to pay their debts, and in some cases imprisoned or exiled those perceived to be a political threat to infamous work camps near Vologda, Solovetskiye Ostrova, Arkhangel'sk, and Tomsk.[36] The government also attempted to diminish the influence of the KfK by taxing, imprisoning, and exiling those ministers who worked for the KfK, and by sponsoring atheistic organizations (such as the League of the Godless) to infiltrate Mennonite communities and convert Mennonites to the creed of atheism. In some Mennonite villages the League of the Godless posed a serious threat to the KfK and local congregations by providing atheistic lectures to Mennonite youth and holding public debates with local clergymen with the intent of demonstrating the folly of religious faith and ridiculing local Mennonite ministers. In some Mennonite communities, the League of the Godless enjoyed moderate success, enlisting new recruits and endangering the survival of some Mennonite congregations.[37]

Other government actions which imperiled Mennonite religious life included the introduction of legislation which limited or prohibited the public expression of religious faith. The government's issuance of the *Decree on Religious Associations* (April 1929) and the *Instructions of the People's Commissariat of the Interior* (October 1929), for example, not only prohibited the biblical instruction of children and the organization of prayer and Bible meetings, but also allowed local soviets and government agencies to take possession of churches that were in tax arrears, and convert them into community halls, theatres, schools, granaries, or livestock stalls.

The introduction of legislation concerning the continuous work week (laws which prohibited Sundays and religious holidays such as Christmas and Easter to be special days of rest) also threatened to destabilize Mennonite religious life.[38] The government's claim was that a continuous work week -- which ordered adults to work and children to attend school on Sundays and religious holidays -- would improve industrial and agricultural production and help in the struggle to extinguish religion and other useless traditions. In some communities this legislation was effective in prompting some to leave the Mennonite religious fold. In other communities, however, these repressive measures led uncommitted Mennonites back into the fold, and resulted in the widespread organization of secret Bible and prayer meetings, a higher number of baptisms in various villages, and an increase in some communities of the number of Mennonite men who were ordained for the ministry. In this respect, the government's attack on the Mennonite church was like a two-edged sword: it threatened the future survival of some Mennonites congregations, while initiating a resurgence of zealous religious commitment and activity in others.[39]

Complementing the government's antireligious measures against Mennonite clergy and congregations were its education and military policies, which attacked the Mennonite educational system and alternative service program. The government's education policies, for example, sought to eradicate all vestiges of religious teaching and doctrine in the schools, to remove those teachers who espoused a religious faith, and to re-build the school curriculum around the atheistic teachings of Marx and Lenin. In many Mennonite communities, school teachers were required to write political examinations designed to screen out those who held religious beliefs; many of those who failed the exams were immediately dismissed from their positions.[40] Those Mennonite teachers who had religious convictions but had managed to evade dismissal were put under greater pressure when they were ordered to incorporate the following principles in their daily school lessons: the principles of the Soviet school system were to be retained in all daily school work and the children were to be instructed in Leninist doctrine; a fight was to be waged against the influence of those teachers belonging to a church or believing community; children were to be urged to participate in community organizations such as the Pioneers; and there was to be a continuation and increase in the work to persuade the children as well as the rest of the population to carry out the cultural revolution and expel the kulak from the countryside. To refuse to implement these principles in the classroom meant loss of employment, economic ruin, and in some cases imprisonment and exile.[41]

Mennonites also felt victimized by government policies that ignored their requests for freedom of religious conscience and exemption from all military service. This was primarily due to the government's use of propaganda to denounce the Mennonite pacifist position, the decisions of many local courts in Ukraine and the Crimea to deny military exemption for most Mennonite conscripts, and the harsh government treatment of Mennonite leaders who worked on behalf of Mennonite participants in the alternative service program. In its propaganda campaign against the Mennonites' position of nonresistance, for example, the government publicized examples of Mennonites who had abandoned pacifism for the glory of serving the fatherland and who chastised the Mennonite clergy for sanctioning the position of nonresistance.[42] Public antipacifist declarations such as these certainly aroused public hostility against the Mennonites' earlier petitions for complete military exemption, and decreased the likelihood of future exemption of Mennonites from military service. By 1928, most Mennonite men of recruitment age in Ukraine and the Crimea were required to serve in a strictly regimented 2-year alternative service program. The program was divided up into 6-month periods of work that stretched out over 4 or 5 consecutive summers and entailed Mennonite men working in often deplorable conditions on construction projects, railway lines, and forestry programs in Ukraine and the northern reaches of the Soviet Union.[43] Under such trying circumstances, Mennonites in Ukraine and the Crimea had good reason to fear that the government would eliminate the alternative service program at any time.

Life for many Mennonite conscripts in the alternative service program was often harsh and inhuman, but it was rarely more difficult than the life of those who were imprisoned or exiled in 1928 and 1929. Although the arrest, imprisonment, and exile of kulaks did not occur at the same rates in 1928 and 1929 as during the wholesale arrest and mass deportation campaigns of the early 1930s, they nevertheless occurred with enough frequency to arouse great anxiety within most Mennonite communities. As early as 1928 there were suggestions in some village newspapers and commune meetings to imprison, exile, and kill kulaks, including Mennonite farmers who failed to meet their grain quotas or taxes.[44] As a result of these suggestions, a small number of Mennonites in Ukraine were exiled to northern regions in 1928. When the Soviet government provided a formal definition of a "kulak household" in May of 1929, some zealous local officials took the opportunity to arrest and exile a significant number of Mennonite farmers and clergymen accused of exploiting the village poor, failing to meet their grain quotas and taxes, being czarist loyalists, and agitating for emigration. The village of Nikolaifeld (Sagradowka), for instance, witnessed 11 people exiled in 1929, while the village of Burwalde (Chortitza) saw 36 Mennonites banished to the north. In Kronstal (Chortitza) there were 42 people who were exiled and in Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]) 56.[45] The alarming number of people banished to the north was interpreted by many Mennonites as an ominous sign of things yet to come.

To avoid exile and arrest, most Mennonites, including those who could be characterized as middle and poor peasants, did everything they could to avoid being labelled as kulaks or enemies of the state. Some Mennonites, for example, sold their livestock and machinery at fire-sale prices or gave it to the local Committee for the Village Poor (CVP) and then signed on as members at the nearest collective farm. Although joining a collective farm at this time was still often equated with compromising one's religious beliefs (the government generally prohibited preaching, proselytizing, and religious instruction on most collective farms), a small minority of Mennonites joined the collectives without too much arm-twisting, recognizing that collective farm life promised some economic advantages and a way of avoiding imprisonment and exile.[46] Thousands of other Mennonites tried to avoid possible arrest and exile by moving out of Ukraine and the Crimea. In some cases this involved moving to those regions of the USSR (such as the Caucasus, Siberia, Samara, and the Amur Region) that the Soviet government wanted to colonize and develop more extensively. Already in 1927 and 1928 Mennonite families from Ukraine and the Crimea sold their property, packed up their personal possessions, and moved to various regions in the eastern territories of the USSR where they established colonies and settlements. Some of those Mennonites who moved east were later able to escape into China. Although the Mennonite refugees faced numerous hardships in China, and were forced to wait for months and even years before they were permitted to emigrate from China to Canada, the United States, or South America, many of them were more than willing to put up with these difficulties in exchange for religious and political freedom.[47]

Escaping from the USSR via China was not the only pathway to freedom for Soviet Mennonites. Thousands of Mennonites from Ukraine and the Crimea were allowed to leave the Soviet Union by acquiring government visas which allowed them to emigrate legally to the West. The reason why the emigration option was so popular with the Mennonite community was because over 17,000 Mennonites from across the Soviet Union had already been allowed to emigrate between July 1923 and April 1927 -- largely because of the efforts of Mennonite organizations such as the VBHH and the AMLV. In mid-1927, however, opposition from the Soviet press and local village authorities compelled the Soviet government to tighten its borders, increase the bureaucratic red tape and cost for emigration passes, and decrease the number of medical inspectors who determined who was medically fit to leave the country.[48] These measures made it increasingly difficult for Mennonites to obtain emigration visas, especially for larger Mennonite families who could not afford to pay for visas for those family members (anyone over 16 years of age) who required them. As a result, only 1,230 Mennonites from across the Soviet Union were permitted to leave the country between April 1927 and November 1929.[49]

What made emigration a more attractive option for Mennonites to escape the increasing oppression of the Soviet government were the events that took place in the latter half of 1929. In August of 1929, a group of 29 Mennonite families who had left Siberia in the late fall of 1928 arrived in Moscow and requested permission from P. Smidovich (a Central Executive Committee member) to emigrate. After Smidovich granted their request and the Mennonite families from Siberia started their journey to Germany in early August, news of their successful petition spread like wildfire throughout the Mennonite colonies. Believing that it was easier to obtain exit visas in Moscow, thousands of Mennonites from Ukraine, the Crimea, and other regions of the USSR immediately packed their belongings and left for the Soviet capital. By mid-September, 250 families (over 1,000 people) had taken up temporary residence in the suburbs of Moscow, and by the end of September the number of families had increased to 400.[50] Despite the colder weather of October and November and repeated warnings by the government that exit visas would no longer be granted, Mennonite families continued to migrate to the suburbs of Moscow where they paid exorbitant rent for shelter and were often forced to live in squalid conditions. By mid-November over 13,000 ethnic German refugees, more than 10,000 of whom were Mennonites, were living in the Soviet capital.[51]

Soviet officials were initially unwilling to allow any more Mennonites to emigrate. What changed the government's position were the persistent efforts of various Mennonite refugees in Moscow and the diplomatic efforts of the German government. Some Mennonite refugees, such as those known as the Kiel group, went so far as to present their emigration petitions to Soviet leaders such as G. Zinoviev (chairman of the Comintern) and M. Kalinin (president of the Soviet Union), and stage demonstrations until they were granted emigration visas to leave the Soviet Union. For thousands of other refugees, however, it was the diplomatic negotiations of the German government that eventually made it possible for them to escape to Germany in November of 1929.[52] Because the overwhelming number of refugees were ethnic Germans, the German government took it upon itself to negotiate an emigration package with the Soviet government which agreed to allow 4,000 to 5,000 refugees to emigrate on the condition that another country would accept them. The German foreign office received reassurances from B. H. Unruh, the leading spokesman for the Mennonites in Germany, that the emigration agreements of the early 1920's between the Canadian Mennonite relief organizations and the Canadian government were still intact, and that the refugees could settle in Canada. The Canadian government later announced, however, that it could not receive any emigres until the spring of 1930 due to its high unemployment rate. The German government, which saw itself only as an intermediary in the process, also announced that with the exception of those refugees who had already arrived in Germany, it would not assume responsibility for the Moscow refugees until the entire matter was clarified.[53] In response to these announcements and the Soviet government's threat to deport the Moscow refugees immediately to their homes or to exile in Siberia, B. H. Unruh assured the German government that the Mennonite communities in North America and in Europe would provide the refugees with financial and material aid. With the help of German newspapers and Mennonite and non-Mennonite churches and relief organizations (such as Brüder in Not), Unruh was also able to raise over 6 million *Reichsmarks* to provide transportation and accommodation for the refugees. In the meantime, however, Soviet officials had sent over 8,000 of the refugees either home or into exile, a process which was finally stopped in late November when the German government agreed to accept the refugees that were still in Moscow. The Soviet government eventually consented to permit almost 5,500 refugees (over 3,480 of whom were Mennonite) to emigrate to Germany in December 1929.[54]

What happened to the thousands of Mennonite refugees who did not receive permission to emigrate? Immediately after the Canadian government put forward its "wait-until-spring" proposal to the Soviet and German governments, the Soviet government arrested and imprisoned hundreds of Mennonite men, and in particular those considered to be the instigators of the trek to Moscow. A few weeks later the government began arresting refugees from all of the religious confessions (Lutheran, Baptist, Evangelical, Adventist, and

Catholic), and by November 17, 1929 had put into operation a plan to transport the refugees either to their home provinces or to exile camps in the northern regions of the USSR. In carrying out this plan, the government first incarcerated a large number of Mennonite male refugees in unventilated, heated rooms, forced them to sign statements that they "voluntarily" wanted to return to their homes, and then loaded them and their families into cattle and coal cars at the Moscow train station. Some Mennonites (including women and children) who refused to get onto the trains were killed by government officials; others were incarcerated in prisons and eventually exiled.[55]

The train trips to the home provinces and the exile camps were also extremely difficult. Often loaded into unheated cattle cars carrying between 40 and 60 people, many of the Mennonite refugees were not given any food provisions and thus died in transit due to hunger and cold. One participant reported that the corpses of 35 children were unloaded onto a platform at one of the train stations *en route* to the Mennonite villages in the south. At a train station on the way to Siberia, another Mennonite observed that the bodies of 60 dead children were carried out of the cattle cars by their parents.[56]

Most of the Mennonite refugees who came back to their abandoned, and in many cases looted, homes in Ukraine and the Crimea had no money, and faced an immediate future of poverty and starvation. Although some families received aid and assistance from their Mennonite and Ukrainian neighbours, many families were unable to acquire any food, despite government promises to supply them with flour and bread. Moreover, since all of the names of the refugees had already been put on the government's black list in Moscow, the refugees were now branded by local authorities as "agitators" for emigration and "outlaws" who threatened the security of the Soviet state. These "agitators" and "outlaws" were now punished by such measures as exorbitant taxes, eviction from their homes, imprisonment, banishment to the north, and in some cases, execution.[57]

Conclusion

The inhuman treatment of the refugees after their forced evacuation from Moscow was the culmination of a 2-year period of increasingly oppressive Soviet measures that left much of the Mennonite community in Ukraine and the Crimea economically, politically, and socially crippled. Outrageous grain quotas, continually rising taxes, and widespread disenfranchisement marked the beginning of the end of private farming and political and economic self-determination within the Mennonite communities. The government's attack on matters of faith -- which included the work of the League of the Godless, the atheistic propaganda campaigns, the oppressive laws concerning church services and proselytizing, the closure of churches, the introduction of the uninterrupted work week, the eradication of religion from the school room, and the aggressive attempts to weaken the Mennonite peace position -- also undermined the powerful influence of Mennonite churches and clergymen in many Mennonite communities. The arrest, imprisonment, and exile of Mennonite clergymen and laymen only confirmed the community's suspicions of how the government intended to bring socialism to the countryside. The inhuman treatment of the Mennonite refugees during and after the flight to Moscow also gave the Mennonite community a preview of what was to come in the immediate future. For the Mennonites, the Moscow ordeal was a scaled-down version of the mass terror and inhumanity that characterized the government's collectivization and dekulakization programs of the early 1930s.

Endnotes for Chapter I

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Chapter II

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Dekulakizing the Mennonite Community in Ukraine and the Crimea

Identifying the Enemies of the State

The policies and events that shaped and determined the Mennonite experience in 1928 and 1929 weakened, if not destroyed, many of the economic, political, religious, and social ties that had previously held the Mennonite community together in the Crimea and Ukraine. Of those ties that survived the 1928-1929 period, many were subsequently destroyed in the period between 1930 and 1933, when the Soviet regime stepped up measures to eliminate the kulaks and undertook a zealous drive to collectivize the peasantry as quickly as possible.[1] The dekulakization campaigns directed against Mennonite kulaks during this period were implemented in concert with the campaigns to collectivize the Mennonite community; dekulakization and collectivization processes were part and parcel of the same government policies and often occurred simultaneously. But while these two processes were frequently carried out at the same time, the plight of the Mennonite kulak in the early 1930s often differed significantly from the plight of his collectivized co-religionist. Indeed, collectivized Mennonites who lost their property and land suffered enormously, but this tribulation was very different from the tribulation of those who, after being labelled as kulaks, subsequently lost not only property and land, but also family members and in many cases their own lives. For this reason, the Mennonite dekulakization experience warrants its own treatment, first in light of the major events, policies, and personalities that surrounded the dekulakization process throughout the Soviet Union, and then in light of how this process affected the Mennonite communities themselves.

Stalin's announcement on December 29, 1929 of the elimination of the kulaks as a class marked an important turning point in the Soviet government's approach and attitude toward the peasantry. Although the announcement was a formal declaration of war against the so-called peasant kulaks, in reality it became a declaration of war against the peasantry in general. Dekulakization measures and campaigns began in 1928 and 1929 in a number of communities, but these were only a foretaste of what was to come in the years to follow. During the 4-year period following Stalin's announcement in December 1929 of his intent to liquidate the kulak, the government's campaign against the kulak class was to culminate in an era of mass terror and suffering for large segments of the Soviet peasantry. Looking back to the lessons that it had learned during the days of "War Communism," the Soviet government was now bent on creating an atmosphere of class hatred within the countryside, warning in early 1930 that the kulak class will refuse to leave the historical stage without the most savage opposition.[2] To guarantee victory in its war against the kulaks, the government recruited the 25,000ers -- the vanguard of the country's industrial proletariat numbering more than 27,000 skilled workers, shock workers, factory activists, civil war veterans, and Communist Party members -- to organize and direct local officials in the collectivization of Soviet agriculture and to carry out the government's liquidation plans for the kulak in the countryside. The Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Politburo), the Central Executive Committee (CEC), and the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) also issued injunctions in January, February, and March of 1930 which permitted village soviets, executive committees, and activists to implement measures necessary to "dekulakize" those peasants considered to be kulaks -- that is, to dispossess them of their property and to execute, imprison, or exile them when necessary.[3]

Along with these injunctions, the CEC and Sovnarkom also formulated directives for local authorities to classify the alleged kulaks into 3 categories. The first category included those kulaks who were considered to be hostile to the Soviet government. As punishment, the government confiscated the kulaks' property, and subsequently imprisoned, exiled, or in some cases executed the kulaks. The families of first-category kulaks were also deported to distant provinces. The second category of kulaks included those peasants who were charged with oppressing other peasants or obstructing the collectivization process. Except for a few personal possessions, the property of this second category of kulaks was confiscated. The government also exiled this category of kulaks along with their families, although in some cases their family members were allowed to remain in their home village. The third category consisted of "non-hostile" kulaks who were subject to only partial dekulakization measures: that is, they were required to surrender their land, but were allowed to keep some of their personal possessions and were permitted to live on small plots of agriculturally substandard land (usually not more than one hectare per person) on the outer borders of the collective farms or in sparsely populated regions of the USSR. Unlike other kulaks, however, the members of the third category were occasionally given the opportunity to join a collective or artel, but only a probationary basis.[4]

To ensure that regional officials had some idea of the pervasiveness of the kulak infestation of the countryside, the Soviet hierarchy provided regional and local officials with information on the estimated number of kulaks in the country as a whole and in the various republics. Local officials also received information as to how many kulaks were expected to be dispossessed of their property and subsequently liquidated. In January of 1930, for example, the Political State Administration (internal security police or GPU) in Ukraine and the Central Committee of the Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine [CC CP(b)U] received estimates that between 3% and 5% of the entire population of the USSR could be characterized as kulak.[5] At the same time, the protocols of the CC CP(b)U provided predictions of how many kulaks from various regions in the USSR would be held in concentration camps and how many would be exiled: a) Central Russia -- there were to be 3,000 to 4,000 kulak households held in concentration camps and 8,000 to 10,000 kulak households exiled; b) Caucasus and Dagestan -- 6,000 to 8,000 kulak households were to be moved to concentration camps and 20,000 kulak households were to be exiled; c) the Lower Volga region -- there were to be 4,000 to 6,000 kulak households sent to concentration camps and 10,000 to 12,000 kulak households exiled; d) Belarus -- 4,000 to 5,000 kulak households were to be held in concentration camps and between 6,000 and 7,000 kulak households exiled; e) the Urals -- between 4,000 and 5,000 kulak households were to be incarcerated in concentration camps and between 10,000 and 15,000 kulak households exiled; f) Siberia -- there would be between 5,000 and 6,000 kulak households held in concentration camps and 25,000 kulak households exiled; and g) Kazakhstan -- 5,000 to 6,000 kulak households would be held in concentration camps and 10,000 to 15,000 kulak households exiled. When it came to Ukraine the CC CP(b)U estimated that there were at least 40,000 kulak households in the republic, of which 15,000 kulak households were to be incarcerated in concentration camps and between 20,000 and 35,000 kulak households were to be exiled to the far north. In order to properly purge the countryside, the CC CP(b)U also stipulated that it was necessary to imprison and exile not only kulaks, but also farmers involved in the grain trade (which in some regions of Ukraine were referred to as "experts") as well as middle and poor peasants who had unsavoury, "counter-revolutionary characters" that posed a threat to the government's collectivization efforts.[6]

With this data at hand, the CC CP(b)U forwarded directives to regional authorities and communist party cells, advising them of the number of kulak households in their respective jurisdictions and the manner in which they were expected to carry out the dekulakization campaigns. More specifically, these directives instructed regional officials and party members on how to categorize kulaks and counter-revolutionaries, and subsequently dispossess, arrest, and exile them accordingly. The CC CP(b)U and GPU also provided regional authorities with detailed plans on the number of kulak households that were expected to be transported from various areas in Ukraine to exile settlements in other regions of the USSR.[7] In February of 1930, for example, the CC CP(b)U made specific plans for the transportation and exile of kulak families from various okrugs in Ukraine. In some okrugs populated with Mennonite settlements, the estimates for the number of kulak households (Mennonite and non-Mennonite) to be exiled for that particular period were as follows: 1,147 kulak households (5,735 people) to be exiled from the Kryvyi Rih okrug, 701 kulak households (3,505 people) from the Dnipropetrovs'ke okrug, 891 kulak households (4,455 people) from the Melitopil' okrug, 472 kulak households (2,360 people) from the Zaporizhzhia okrug, 982 kulak households (4,910 people) from the Mykolaïv okrug, and 1,136 kulak households (5,680 people) from the Kherson okrug.[8] With these estimates, regional and local authorities had some guidelines as to how aggressive they would have to be in implementing their dekulakization campaigns.

The CC CP(b)U and GPU estimates, injunctions, and directives were drafted for the purpose of inciting a class war and systematically purging the peasantry of its undesirable kulak class; all too often, however, local authorities ignored directions from above and carried out their activities without so much as the semblance of a plan. This was because some local executive committees and village soviets collectively interpreted all instructions from above as a license to attack the peasantry as a whole. It was not uncommon for an executive committee or a village soviet to carry out dispossession, eviction, imprisonment, exile, and execution measures against all classes of peasants, regardless of whether or not they fit into the government's definition of a kulak. Adopting as their slogan the catch phrase, "dekulakize first, and collectivize later," local officials temporarily postponed the work of creating collective farms, and embarked on campaigns to liquidate kulaks, with or without the blessing of the peasantry. Due to the vigilante-like approach adopted by many regional authorities, there was disorder, violence, looting, brutality, and debauchery in various regions of the country, leaving peasants from all social classes vulnerable to being dekulakized.[9]

A temporary period of relaxation in the dekulakization process occurred after the publication of Stalin's article "Dizzy with Success" (an article which chastised his subordinates for their excesses in implementing the collectivization programs) in March 1930. By the late spring of 1930, however, the government reimplemented its dekulakization programs, creating a wave of disorder that continued for the following 3 years. One of the results of this disorder was the exile of millions of peasants -- a significant number of whom were non-kulaks -- to the far reaches of the Soviet Union between 1930 and 1933.[10] The majority of these peasants were exiled during uncurbed mass exile campaigns which were conducted primarily in 1930 and 1931, but which continued intermittently until May 1933, when Stalin signed a decree stating that the exile of individual families would occur at a rate of only 12,000 per year in the future. In the exile camps, peasants lived in decrepit, life-threatening conditions, working for long hours with little or no compensation. Some eventually escaped from the camps, and survived by their own efforts. Of the millions of exiles who never escaped, however, more than 25% perished, a significant number of whom were children.[11]

Mennonite Kulaks and Local Officials

One group of people that experienced first hand what it meant to be a kulak was the Mennonite community in Ukraine and the Crimea. A non-Slavic, relatively prosperous, and religiously eccentric people, the Mennonites easily fit into the ambiguous and open-ended Soviet definition of kulak.[12] Although in 1928 and 1929 the Soviet definition of the term "kulak" was generally used in Mennonite settlements to refer to those Mennonites who were considered to be wealthier than their coreligionists, such criteria disappeared between 1930 and 1933. After Stalin announced his plans for the kulak in December of 1929 the vague economic restrictions that were inherent within this definition were routinely ignored by officials who now focused on the pre-revolutionary wealth of the Mennonite community as just cause to brand many members of the community as kulaks and experts, regardless of their actual social and economic status. Now it was often the personal whims of local officials and village soviets, rather than government policies, that determined which and how many Mennonite peasants were to be dekulakized. In this respect, the anti-kulak campaigns in many Mennonite-populated regions that occurred between 1930 and 1933 ignored well-defined class lines and affected Mennonites of every economic status.[13]

Who were these local officials? Many were Ukrainians, Russians, and Jews who held local administrative and political positions of power and influence in Mennonite-populated areas. Others were the descendants of Catholic and Lutheran colonists who had emigrated to Russia from Germany during the reign of Catherine the Great. Still other officials were of Mennonite background, who became members of the Soviet government administrative cadre for a variety of reasons, including ideological affinity with the Soviet government, disillusionment with their religious tradition, economic self-interest, protection for the social status of their families, or promised exemption from the repressive treatment that came with being labelled a kulak or expert.[14]

The majority of Mennonites who worked for the regime did so within the village soviets, the lowest administrative bodies within the political hierarchy of the Soviet regime. Mennonites who worked within the village soviets were on the front line in the war against the kulak; this meant that many of these Mennonite officials participated in the dekulakization of fellow Mennonites. In some cases, Mennonite members of the village soviet took their directions to liquidate kulaks from Comrade Stalin himself, whose letters to the nation concerning the dekulakization and collectivization process were discussed at village soviet meetings and subsequently implemented; in other cases, the dekulakization orders came from officials in government agencies which monitored the process. The end result was that Mennonite members of village soviets such as Rosenort (Molotschna), Schöneberg (Chortitza), Burwalde (Chortitza), Pawlowka (Chortitza), Nieder-Chortitza (Chortitza), and Münsterberg (Molotschna), drew up lists of local landowners and their property holdings, and then passed resolutions as to which landowners were to be labelled as kulaks and experts and eventually liquidated.[15] To facilitate the process of preparing the detailed lists of landowners and property holdings, Mennonites in some villages participated in tax commissions which were established by the local soviets to keep statistical data regarding the rural and urban populations within the jurisdiction, and which determined which Mennonite and non-Mennonite households would receive the brunt of the tax levies intended to liquidate the assets of kulaks and experts. Other Mennonites worked on local Village Investigation Commissions and Committees for the Liquidation of the Kulak which were composed of members from various officially recognized agencies and specific social groups.[16] The investigation commissions in Neuendorf (Chortitza) and Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo), for instance, included members from the Communist Party, the Committees of the Poor, women's organizations, and other Soviet-sanctioned agencies. As might be expected, kulaks and experts were not permitted to become members of the investigation commissions which were composed primarily of poor peasants, middle peasants, workers, labourers, and teachers. In Burwalde (Chortitza) the Commission for the Liquidation of the Kulak included 12 members, all of whom were Mennonite.[17]

The mandate of these commissions was to provide profiles of the social constituency of the village and surrounding area. The commissions also interrogated, provided "characterizations" of, and rooted out those Mennonites and non-Mennonites who were exploiting the poor, who were enemies of the state, or who were unfit to serve in public life, such as in the Red Army. The characterizations provided a brief description of the property (land and livestock) of a particular household before and after the Bolshevik Revolution, the amount of taxes the head of the household previously paid, the social class of the household (i.e. kulak, expert, middle peasant), and the householders' crimes, if any, against the state.[18] Once the characterizations were obtained, the rooting out process began. It included identifying kulak and expert households, ascribing a monetary value to their property, household goods, livestock and homes, expropriating their property and livestock in the name of a local collective farm or artel, destroying the means by which the kulak or expert households earned a livelihood, and providing reports of the dekulakization of kulak and expert households to higher authorities.[19]

In those areas where Mennonites dominated the village soviet, they routinely had to make hard decisions in administering the dekulakization process in their territory. It was not unheard of for Mennonites in some local soviets to pass resolutions to have Mennonite kulaks, experts, and their families exiled to various regions in the Soviet Union, and in some cases even calling for them to be condemned to death. This was the case in Pawlowka (Chortitza) where Mennonite members of the local soviet took their job very seriously and dekulakized 17 Mennonite households in February of 1930. After preparing detailed property inventories of Mennonite kulaks and experts in their village, the Mennonite village soviet officials participated in resolutions which called for the exile of 1 Mennonite family to Siberia, 2 to Solovetskiye Ostrova, and 7 out of Ukraine. Resolutions were passed to confiscate the property of 7 other Mennonite families. Members of the soviet also initially suggested that one of the Mennonite kulaks be sentenced to death; after further thought, however, they elected to exile him and his family to Siberia.[20] Similar decisions were made in other Mennonite communities. In Nieder-Chortitza (Chortitza) and Blumengart (Chortitza), for instance, the members of the local soviet, who were almost all Mennonite, dekulakized 13 of their co-religionists and their families on February 24, 1930; 5 Mennonite families were to be exiled out of Ukraine, 3 were to be exiled out of the region, and the remaining 5 families were to have their property "socialized" (that is, inventoried, sold off, and the proceeds given to the village collective).[21] As late as 1933, village soviets continued to carry out extensive dekulakization campaigns. In the spring of 1933, for example, the Mennonite chairmen of the Münsterberg (Molotschna) and Blumenstein (Molotschna) village soviets called for the dekulakization of 17 families in each village, almost all of whom were Mennonite; the village soviets also sought to impose harsh taxes on the households and to exile a number of the families.[22] Mennonites dekulakized other Mennonites in the name of the Soviet regime.

It was not uncommon for Mennonites who worked in the local soviets to join other Soviet government-sanctioned associations such as the CVP. Because members of the CVP were often also members of the village soviet, the two organizations worked hand in hand on projects related to cleansing the countryside of kulaks and experts. In addition to various administrative duties such as addressing complaints of the village poor and facilitating collectivization endeavours, the local CVP helped to establish a vast network of informants in the community that provided information to local soviets and other government agencies in conducting their dekulakization activities. Members of the CVP also participated in labelling and characterizing Mennonite households as kulaks and experts.[23] What some Mennonites eventually discovered, however, was that membership in the CVP or the village soviet did not guarantee immunity from being labelled a kulak or expert. Periodically, members of a local CVP, or a village soviet, who were suspected of being too sympathetic toward the kulak cause were immediately "characterized" as being kulaks or experts, quickly expelled from the CVP or village soviet by their comrades, and subsequently subjected to the same barrage of dekulakization measures that they had previously meted out to their co-religionists. This was the experience of a number of Mennonite members of the Burwalde (Chortitza) CVP and the Münsterberg (Molotschna) village soviet who were dismissed from their respective organizations and dekulakized after they were accused of showing too much concern for the treatment of local kulaks, harbouring a lingering allegiance to the local Mennonite church, or carrying on anti-soviet activities.[24]

Mennonite participation in Soviet-sponsored agencies that had a hand in the dekulakization process was not restricted to the village soviet or local CVP. A number of Mennonites, for example, worked in the regional administrative office of the CVP and in the Workers and Peasants Inspection Committee (WPIC) where they helped with the logistical implementation of dekulakization. In some areas, such as Ohrloff (Molotschna) and Chortitza for instance, Mennonites advanced in their professions, held executive positions in the CVP and WPIC, and made and implemented decisions that determined the fate of their coreligionists.[25] For instance, some of these Mennonite administrators established worker-peasant inspection brigades which had the task of inspecting local households to determine which families were to be resettled and dekulakized. Mennonite administrators in the CVP and WPIC also prepared biographies of alleged Mennonite kulaks which detailed their pre- and post-revolutionary activities, their property holdings, and their contacts with North Americans. The WPIC also passed resolutions which transferred the property of Mennonite kulaks and experts to local artels and collectives and which prohibited the dekulakized from joining collective or state farms. These resolutions were often submitted for final ratification to other Soviet government agencies. Although Mennonite administrators in the CVP and WPIC frequently received pleas from Mennonite kulaks requesting that they not be resettled or exiled, these pleas usually fell on deaf ears.[26]

Mennonites also found work in the Regional Land Division Committee (RLDC) and the District Expert Commissions (DEC), influential organizations that also played important roles in liquidating the kulak menace. In 1929 and 1930, for instance, the chairman of the RLDC in the Chortitza area was of Mennonite origin. His job description included determining which kulaks had failed to pay the taxes on their properties, making lists of property owned by peasant, middle-peasant, and kulak families, and assisting in the expropriation of kulak and expert property for the purpose of redistributing it among the poorer peasants and facilitating the collectivization process. As was the case with the RLDC, Mennonite members of the DEC also assisted in the dekulakization of Mennonite households and provided important statistical data used in characterizing particular Mennonites as kulaks and experts.[27]

It should be noted, however, that the role of Mennonite officials in the dekulakization process was not restricted exclusively to administrative matters. There were a few Mennonites whose participation in this process was connected with their positions in the local judiciary. In the Chortitza area, for example, there was at least 1 Mennonite who, as secretary of the local people's court, signed orders imposing fines and punishment on local Mennonites who had allegedly violated Article 58 of the country's criminal code.[28]

Mennonites also found their way into leadership positions within local cells of the Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine [CP(b)U]. To attract and accommodate German-speaking recruits, the CP(b)U allowed members in Mennonite-populated regions to conduct local party affairs in the German language. As early as 1928 and 1929, a small number of Mennonites in the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies had been recruited to the ranks of the local Communist Party organs and participated in its decision-making process.[29] During the early 1930's, economic, social, and political instability compelled more Mennonites to renounce their sectarian loyalties and apply for party membership. By 1933, for example, there were at least 4 Mennonites in Gnadenfeld (Molotschna) who were party members, 4 in Rückenau (Molotschna), and at least 7 in Lichtenau (Molotschna).[30] In both the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies, moreover, the protocols from local Communist Party meetings included the names of Mennonites who were either party members or candidates for party membership and who directed the work of local Pioneers and Komsomols (Young Communist League), carried out anti-religious activities within the surrounding populations, prepared lists of known and suspected kulaks and experts, and made policy decisions on such issues as how to recruit Mennonite youth. Mennonite party members were also required to vet potential recruits to keep the party free of unwanted kulak-sympathizing elements. One of their most important tasks was determining the suitability of candidates who were "elected" to positions in the village soviet or the CVP, given that these candidates would ultimately make important decisions in setting the pace and scope of dekulakization and collectivization in the countryside.[31]

Perhaps the agency through which Mennonites exerted the most influence in dictating the pace of the dekulakization of their villages was Executive Committee of the District Soviet of People's Deputies (ECDS). In some of the larger Mennonite communities, the executive and secretariat of the local ECDS included those of Mennonite heritage who were ordered to liquidate all of the kulaks within their jurisdiction. In the Chortitza region, for example, both the chairman and secretariat of the presidium of the Chortitza ECDS were Mennonites who oversaw the dekulakization process in the colony and surrounding area.[32]

The mandate of the local ECDS was broad in scope and jurisdiction. It included implementing directives from superiors at the All-Ukraine Central Executive Committee of the District Soviet of People's Deputies, overseeing the creation of collective farms and artels, supervising local construction projects, and creating and implementing monetary and economic strategies, as well as monitoring associations and societies for a particular region. One of the most important tasks of the ECDS was to finalize the lists of kulaks and experts who were to be expelled from a particular district. In carrying out this task, the ECDS in areas such as Molotschna and Chortitza relied heavily on the assistance of the village soviets and the CVP.[33] The ECDS provided weekly, and in some cases daily, directives to village soviets and other Soviet agencies on how to deal with the kulaks and experts in their settlements, and in return required the village soviets and agencies to provide detailed lists, characterizations, and social descriptions of those Mennonites who were suspected of, or had allegedly participated in kulak and expert activities. The ECDS also demanded detailed information on those Mennonites who had expressed dissatisfaction with the current Soviet government, had fled to Moscow in 1929 with the aim of emigrating to North America, were considered to be *Reichsdeutsche* (that is, Germans who demonstrated an allegiance to the German state), or were unable to speak the Russian language.[34]

The information provided to the ECDS by the village soviets often included the name and size of the particular Mennonite family, the family's social and occupational status, and how much land and property the family owned. In some cases, the Chortitza ECDS was given detailed maps highlighting those Mennonite households slated for dekulakization and resettlement, as well as detailed inventories and valuations of Mennonite farm property that had already been socialized for the benefit of local collectives.[35] The ECDS also issued directives to village soviets on how to identify and characterize kulak and expert households; with the help of the soviets, the ECDS collected inventories of property owned by alleged kulaks and experts, assessed how much they were to pay in taxes, regulated how much land (if any) they were allowed to farm, and not infrequently passed orders to repossess their homes. The ECDS also took it upon itself to monitor the dekulakization efforts of local soviets within its jurisdiction, calling upon village soviets to justify why a particular person had not been disenfranchised or dekulakized, and reprimanding those village soviets that failed to understand the dangerous threat of "kulak politics" and did not take appropriate measures against those people whom the ECDS saw as the invidious enemies of the state.[36]

After the village soviets had forwarded the necessary resolutions calling for the dekulakization of particular households, Mennonite and non-Mennonite officials in the ECDS reviewed the resolutions and subsequently signed the final orders that dekulakized and in many cases ultimately resulted in the exile of Mennonites.[37] In the Chortitza area, for instance, these orders were usually on small slips of paper which provided biographical data about the proposed kulak and summarized the decisions made by the respective village soviet and the presidium of the Chortitza ECDS concerning what was to happen to the kulak. More specifically, the orders included the following information: the particular protocol number of the meeting of the ECDS presidium; the date on which the presidium met; the surname, Christian name, and often the patronymic of the Mennonite to be dekulakized; his or her current age; previous and current tax assessments; a current inventory of his or her property; an inventory of his or her property prior to the Bolshevik Revolution; information as to whether or not he or she took up arms against the Red Army during the Austro-German occupation during World War I or on behalf of the White Army during and after the Bolshevik Revolution; the decision of the local collective or soviet to dekulakize and exile the Mennonite outside of Ukraine; and the ratification by the presidium of the Chortitza ECDS of the decision of the village soviet or collective farm. At the bottom of the order was the signature of the secretary or chairman of the ECDS, who was often a Mennonite. To the extent that they were involved in the ECDS, Mennonite officials approved and signed orders that would ultimately result in the death of fellow Mennonites. After the individual orders were signed, the Chortitza ECDS routinely prepared long lists of names of dekulakized Mennonites which were forwarded to those carrying out the orders; a single list often contained 20 to 40, and sometimes over 50 Mennonite names from a particular village. Although the ECDS's dekulakization activities against Mennonites were most intense in 1930 and 1931, they continued in 1932 and 1933 with routine frequency.[38]

Occasionally, those Mennonite officials who had administered dekulakization measures against kulak households were the object of dekulakization measures themselves. This occurred after their activities were investigated by commissions that were established to cleanse local bureaucratic institutions of unsuitable elements. When these commissions found that the backgrounds or activities of particular Mennonite officials represented a dangerous threat to the country, the commissions deposed these Mennonite officials from their privileged status and subjected them to the same measures that were used with other enemies of the state.[39]

That some Mennonites actively participated in the dekulakization of fellow Mennonites does not come as a complete surprise. Mennonites who escaped from the USSR after World War II confirmed that there were Mennonites who colluded with the Soviet regime in the late 1920s and early 1930s. What is new is the documented evidence suggesting that many Mennonites worked for the state, and that a significant number of Mennonites, particularly in the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies, obtained influential positions within local government agencies and Communist party cells. Given the long-standing Mennonite tradition of non-involvement in secular government, the phenomenon of widespread Mennonite participation in Soviet agencies during the early 1930s represents an unprecedented event in Mennonite history. What led to this *volte face* were the oppressive events of 1928 and 1929 that had eroded many Mennonites' willingness to abide by their religious mores and traditional practices. In a society where the definition of an "enemy of the state" was vague and fluctuating, many Mennonites were convinced that renouncing their religious heritage and working with the state was the only way that they could protect themselves and their families from the suffering they saw Mennonite kulaks, experts, and religious leaders experiencing.

What is also unprecedented is that Mennonites in various positions of power -- whether they were in the village soviet or on the ECDS -- abandoned their traditional pacifist stance and participated in acts of violence against their Ukrainian, Russian, and Mennonite neighbours by expropriating their property, sending them into exile, or imprisoning them. Unlike previous periods of persecution, during which Mennonites often closed ranks and assisted each other through tribulation, Soviet dekulakization succeeded in pitting Mennonite against Mennonite in a life and death struggle to survive — a first in Mennonite history. The evidence clearly indicates that there was a significant number of Mennonites who played an active role in determining how dekulakization would occur within their communities.

Finally, Soviet dekulakization created new political hierarchies in the Mennonite communities. With the decapitation of the traditional Mennonite leadership (which included preachers, former estate owners, and teachers), the disadvantaged elements within Mennonite society (such as the village poor, women, and those disenchanted with the Mennonite community) began to play an important role in governing their communities for the first time. At the same time, however, the appointment of new political leaders in Mennonite communities resulted in the destruction of the political and religious ties that had previously united Mennonite communities across Ukraine and the Crimea. Without these ties, each Mennonite community was now on its own, cut adrift in the social and political chaos that accompanied Soviet dekulakization.

Identifying Mennonite Kulaks

Who was a kulak? In some Mennonites villages, local authorities used tax lists, annual incomes, characterizations, and the amount of property owned by each inhabitant to determine which peasants were to be regarded as kulaks and experts. In September of 1929, for instance, the members of any household which had an annual income of 1,500 rubles or more were immediately identified as kulaks without further investigation, as were those households in which each individual member earned more than 300 rubles per year. By the early months of 1930, more arbitrary criteria were used to single out the archenemies of the state: anyone who employed labourers on a regular basis or who owned a flour, wind, or water mill, a fruit or vegetable dehydrator, a tannery or wool carder, mechanical agricultural machinery, commercial buildings, or a house that was comparatively larger than those of his neighbours was considered to be a class enemy.[40] In other Mennonite communities, the lists of individuals eligible for the dekulakization process often included the names of those who were related to other kulaks, were devout members of a local church, were of unacceptable social background, or had previously attempted to emigrate from the Soviet Union. Other likely candidates for dekulakization included Mennonites who refused to join the local collective, as well as those who received letters, parcels, or money from the West or purchased commodities at the state-sponsored Torgsin stores (where those with foreign currency could buy commodities at inexpensive prices). The label of kulak was often assigned to Mennonites who entertained kulaks visiting from designated kulak settlements or harboured kulaks fleeing from exile camps in the north, as well as to Mennonites who were accused of committing crimes against the state.[41] With such arbitrary criteria at their disposal, local authorities could initiate dekulakization proceedings against virtually any person they pleased.

To ratify their selection of candidates for dekulakization, local officials often convened a village meeting with the enfranchised householders of the community or the members of a local collective. Terrified of the officials and activists, the enfranchised villagers and collective members usually gave unanimous assent to whatever list of kulaks the authorities put forward, realizing that if they rejected the list, their own names would soon appear on it. In addition to rubber-stamping these proposals and lists, the enfranchised peasants were also required to ratify the type of punishment already selected for each soon-to-be-dekulakized inhabitant -- that is, whether a particular person on the kulak list was to be executed, exiled to another village or region, imprisoned, or allowed to remain in the village but without various privileges or voting rights.[42] In the early months of 1930, for instance, the enfranchised inhabitants of Chortitza were called together at a local school and obliged to endorse a decision to dekulakize 33% of all German inhabitants and 66% of all Ukrainian and Russian inhabitants. Local authorities in other Mennonite settlements (such as those in the Crimea) did not even bother to convene village meetings, but instead called upon the poorer village inhabitants -- some of whom were Mennonites -- to handpick those fellow villagers who were to be dispossessed, evicted, arrested, exiled, or executed. With the official blessing of the local newspapers such as Stürmer, Deutscher Kollektivist, and

Das Neue Dorf, these officials acted as the self-appointed judges of class consciousness and exploitation, and often carried out their personal vendettas against their neighbours by levying false charges against them.[43] Because of the frequently inconsistent and indiscriminate procedures used in selecting peasants for the dekulakization process, many Mennonites naturally complained of being victimized and persecuted, and of not having any legal, political, or economic means to defend themselves.

Taxes and Grain Quotas

A household that received the label of "kulak" immediately became the target of a barrage of oppressive dekulakization measures. Two of these measures which had already had limited success in 1928 and 1929 were the imposition of grain quotas and inflated taxes (such as income tax, land tax, self tax, building tax, or means-of-transport tax). Whereas in 1928 and 1929 a person's taxes and grain quotas were often determined by tax lists and the amount of land he or she possessed, this was no longer the practice during the early 1930s. Village soviets, the CVP, communist party cells, the ECDS, the WPIC, the RLDC, and the tax commissions now often arbitrarily multiplied the taxes and grain quotas of those who were characterized as kulaks or experts. In late 1929 and early 1930, some village authorities initially imposed monthly and tri-monthly income-tax and self-tax levies on individual Mennonite households which were based on detailed reports of the household's income, the number of hectares the household farmed, the number of livestock it possessed, and the number of members in the household.[44] In determining these taxes, however, officials frequently made inflated assumptions as to how much income a household could earn from a few hectares of land, how much money the livestock from a household had generated or was worth, or how much additional income the household had obtained from undisclosed sources. While tax levies for some households were relatively low, ranging from 5% to 25% of a household's total revenues from all sources, the levies for other households ranged between 50% and 70% of total income. These levies imposed great financial strain on the farmers, given that most did not have the income or assets that were attributed to them by officials.[45] To ensure that their candidates for the dekulakization process would be forced into certain financial ruin, local authorities frequently levied the taxes and grain quotas concurrently -- a double-barrelled imposition designed to quickly liquidate all of a farmer's meagre economic assets. As a result of this practice, some Mennonites were ordered to pay more in taxes than they were able to earn, and to supply more in grain than it was possible to harvest even during a bumper crop year. In the early months of 1930, for example, local officials required a Mennonite family from Friedensfeld (Sagradowka) to pay 500 rubles in taxes and to deliver 500 poods of grain -- a demand which the family found impossible to fulfill. In another village, a Mennonite family that farmed only 10.5 dessiatines of land was subpoenaed to supply 772 poods of grain and pay 709 rubles in taxes in the autumn of 1930. Initially, local officials kept detailed lists of the grain and produce that the farmers were required to deliver, and occasionally paid the Mennonite farmers who were being dekulakized a token price for their wheat (often between 1 and 1.7 rubles per pood). By mid-1930, however, the wheat was simply expropriated, and those who did not have sufficient grain to meet their quotas were forced to purchase it on the black market at prices ranging from 4 to 10 rubles a pood.[46]

Some Mennonites were saved the trouble of trying to buy grain at exorbitant prices to meet government quotas. Their property and income taxes were tailored to put an economic stranglehold on their farming operations, and the outlandish increases in their self-tax (frequently assessed at between 50% and 100% of property and income taxes) and state loans (obligations) insured that they would go into immediate bankruptcy. In a village in the Crimea, for instance, a Mennonite who farmed only 4.5 dessiatines of wheat found himself hopelessly in debt to the government after he was taxed 1,000 rubles. This was similar to the experience of another Mennonite in Ukraine who was required to pay 1,632 rubles in taxes, and a Mennonite from Hierschau (Molotschna) who was taxed 1,900 rubles.[47] In the Chortitza villages of Einlage, Burwalde, and Osterwick, anyone who was considered "wealthy" by local activists was automatically levied a tax of between 1,000 and 2,000 rubles. This was also the case in Münsterberg (Molotschna) in 1933 when 17 Mennonite households were, for no apparent reason, characterized as kulak and expert farms and ordered to pay between 100 and 2,000 rubles in taxes. Those kulak farmers who were in tax arrears or who failed to provide grain requested by local officials were subjected to a barrage of fines ranging from 200 to over 500 rubles per household.[48] Such examples of extortionist tax assessments and grain quotas were not rare or isolated phenomena in Mennonite communities in 1930; rather, they were recurring examples of the government's bellicose approach to dealing with the kulaks in the Mennonite countryside.

Mennonite farmers were not the only people who felt the brunt of the government's tax and grain expropriation programs; Mennonites clergymen, church elders, and lay ministers were also the target of inflated taxes and grain quotas in 1930. Often characterized by local officials as sworn enemies of the state, Mennonite clergymen who were not previously exiled in 1928 and 1929 were monitored and treated as threats to the security of the nation. To obtain an accurate profile of these security threats, the ECDS circulated questionnaires to village soviets which sought information concerning the birthplaces and birth dates of local clergyman, the towns in which they lived, the churches in which they served, and the social classes to which they belonged. With this information at hand, local authorities and village soviets subsequently imposed arbitrary grain quotas and tax assessments on those clergymen who owned their own farms.[49] In Halbstadt (Molotschna), for instance, a Mennonite preacher who had a small farming operation in 1930 was ordered to relinquish 320 poods of wheat and 380 poods of other grains, despite the fact that he had not grown any wheat on his land in the previous year. At the same time, he was required to purchase obligations from the state and pay 336 rubles in property taxes and 183 rubles in self-taxes. Mennonite clergymen in other villages were also shocked to discover that their income taxes had doubled and even tripled since 1929. Mennonite pastors in the Sagradowka region whose annual taxes were assessed at between 200 and 300 rubles in previous years, were charged 500 rubles in taxes in the early months of 1930. A Mennonite elder from Einlage (Chortitza) was financially ruined after he was ordered to pay 850 rubles in taxes; this was the same misfortune experienced by another Mennonite preacher from Ukraine who was taxed 900 rubles. Although some ministers were able to pay these initial tax levies with the financial help of their parishioners, the overwhelming majority could not meet the subsequent assessments and were eventually dekulakized.[50]

One of the results of these tax and grain assessments was that very few Mennonite households in Ukraine and the Crimea still owned their farms by 1931. In some Mennonite villages, such as those in the Sagradowka colony, only 5% of the land was still privately owned in mid-1931; the other 95% of the land had been collectivized. In other Mennonite villages such as Chortitza and Rosental (Chortitza), individual farming operations were virtually extinct by the end of 1930.[51]

For those individual farmers who had somehow survived the oppressive measures of 1930, their troubles and worries were by no means over. Between 1931 and 1933, taxes and quotas were still assessed with the aim of milking dry whatever assets the individual farming operations still possessed. Such was the experience of one Mennonite family that found itself dispossessed of its property after it failed to pay 500 rubles in taxes and supply a few centners of meat. Financial ruin was also the fate of Mennonites dekulakized in 1932 and 1933. A Mennonite family from Waldheim (Molotschna) went bankrupt when it was required to pay 500 rubles in taxes. In Rosenort (Molotschna), several Mennonite women who still owned property after their husbands or fathers had either died or been imprisoned were levied taxes between 430 and 1,000 rubles.[52] An even worse scenario unfolded for a Mennonite man from Mariental (Molotschna) who was ordered to pay 5,000 rubles in taxes. Among the few Mennonites who still occupied their own farms and property in 1932 and 1933, only a handful of them (such as very poor widows) were exempted from the usual taxes, quotas, and dekulakization measures. From the very beginning, it was evident to many Mennonites that land-, agricultural-, income-, and self-taxes were aimed at putting individual landowners out of operation. In some areas, government officials routinely charged individuals, especially those recently characterized as kulaks and experts, with self-tax levies of 100% to 200% of their agricultural and income tax assessments. Unfortunately, very little of the money raised from the taxes collected in Mennonite regions was used for local projects; instead, it was usually diverted into government industrialization projects, such as the construction of the Dnieper Dam electrical power station and heavy industry factories.[53]

Of course, the leaders of the Mennonite churches were not spared from inflated tax levies and grain quotas between 1931 and 1933. While the high tax assessments imposed on clergymen, elders, and lay ministers in 1930 put a significant economic strain on their families and parishioners, these assessments were relatively low in comparison to those levied in 1931, when the taxes of church leaders reached outrageous amounts. In Chortitza, for example, 2 Mennonite preachers who had each paid around 250 rubles in taxes in previous years were taxed 1,400 and 1,500 rubles respectively in 1931. Local officials in another Mennonite village gave a Mennonite preacher only 1 hour to deliver 100 poods of grain and pay 2,000 rubles in taxes.[54] Such unreasonable assessments were also meted out to the church leaders in Ohrloff (Molotschna). In this village, a Mennonite preacher was ordered to pay 2,000 rubles in taxes, and a Mennonite elder was taxed 3,000 rubles. Some Mennonite congregations continued to assist their ministers in meeting these heavy-handed tax assessments, but most congregations could not continue to bail out their clergymen, and as a result the dekulakization campaign against church leaders was an unquestionable success in Mennonite communities.[55]

There were no reprieves from taxes and grain quotas for Mennonite church leaders in 1932 or 1933. Very few Mennonite clergymen or elders were able to collect sufficient funds or collateral to pay off their debts, and more often than not the challenge of paying off a series of ever-increasing grain quotas and tax assessments proved to be a sisyphean task. In the village of Gnadenfeld (Molotschna), for instance, local officials initially ordered one Mennonite minister to pay 158 rubles in taxes in 1932. When he and his congregation raised the required amount, the officials immediately issued a higher tax assessment. The officials continued this familiar and standard procedure of re-issuing progressively higher tax notices until the minister eventually failed to make his payments. This same procedure was also used against a Mennonite minister from Neukirch (Molotschna) who was taxed 1,000 rubles between January and June 1933 and who was eventually forced into bankruptcy.[56]

By levying grossly inflated grain quotas and taxes on those Mennonite households chosen to be dekulakized, local officials siphoned off whatever available crops and cash these households still possessed, and left them hopelessly in debt to the government. To guarantee that these farmers would not meet any of their financial obligations, officials in some villages imposed restrictions which prohibited Mennonites who had failed to meet their taxes or quotas from selling any of their property or farm produce to raise sufficient funds to pay off their debts. In one village in Ukraine, for example, a Mennonite man was required to supply 1,500 rubles worth of grain and pay 400 rubles in taxes in 1930; at the same time, however, he was forbidden to sell any of his property or produce in order to raise the required amount.[57] Those Mennonites who were discovered to have purchased livestock and grain from Mennonite kulaks, experts, or preachers were ridiculed in local newspapers, such as Das Neue Dorf, as kulak sympathizers who must be subjected to the same dekulakization measures. Local officials in other villages restricted what farmers could do with their grain or imposed penalty fines on the already highly taxed households. Mennonites in various villages in the Chortitza region faced restrictions on cleaning or selling their grain, and saw their tax assessments double when they were unable to pay their original tax assessments within 1 week. When their increased assessments were not paid on the appointed day, the farmers were fined 3 times the original levy. Similarly, a Mennonite elder in another Mennonite village in Ukraine was ordered to pay 3,000 rubles in penalty fines after he failed to pay his tax assessment of 1,200 rubles. Another Mennonite saw his tax assessment of 1,632 rubles increase 5-fold when he could not pay his taxes within the allotted 24-hour period. In the Molotschna colony, those Mennonites who failed to supply the required grain quota within 7 days were required to pay a 150-ruble fine or else risk having their property confiscated by the government.[58] The imposition of such restrictions and fines insured that Mennonites who defaulted on their assessments and quotas would never repay their debt to the Soviet government.

The state's extraordinary tax and grain assessments accomplished that which the Bolshevik Revolution and the Civil War had failed to do: they permanently damaged the economic infrastructure of the Mennonite community and proved instrumental in purging the Mennonite community of its traditional economic, political, and religious leadership. Paid assessments stripped the Mennonite communities of their financial resources, and unpaid assessments gave local authorities the reason to exile or imprison anyone they wanted. In such dire economic circumstances, it was not difficult for local government authorities, such as village soviets, to exert control over the Mennonite communities. What is also important to recognize is that some of these state authorities were Mennonites whose duties included determining who would be assessed and what their assessments would be. These Mennonites participated in a tax- and grain-collection process which resulted in the "enserfment" of thousands of Mennonites to the Soviet government. Thus, not all of the responsibility for the long-term destructive repercussions of the tax levies and grain quotas can be attributed to Soviet bureaucrats making decisions beyond the borders of Mennonite communities; some of the responsibility falls on Mennonite shoulders.

Disenfranchisement, Dispossession, Eviction, Hunger, and Ridicule

After failing to meet tax assessments, grain quotas, and penalty fines, the now-bankrupt Mennonite kulaks were disenfranchised, dispossessed of their property, and often evicted from their homes. With disenfranchisement came the loss of any status or voting privileges in the local village soviet and thus the lack of any right to defend one's interests or property; as a "non-person," the disenfranchised kulak had no control over his or her ultimate fate. In a number of Mennonite villages, detailed lists of those disenfranchised Mennonites who were kulaks or the children of kulaks were kept on hand by local officials to monitor their activities. Many of these lists also contained specific information as to why a particular Mennonite was disenfranchised, including the kulak's previous status as a landowner or involvement as a Sunday school teacher or pastor. As was the case with disenfranchisement, the number of families in a particular village who were dispossessed of their property and evicted from their homes also depended largely upon the caprice of local officials.[59] Whereas dispossession and eviction measures in 1928 and 1929 were generally limited to clergymen and wealthier farmers, these measures were no longer restricted to any economic or social class between 1930 and 1933, and few Mennonite families were exempted from such measures.

Because the Soviet government gave local authorities free reign to implement dispossession and eviction measures as they saw fit in their own jurisdictions, many Mennonites who had been branded as kulaks lived in perpetual fear and terror; they never knew when the next dispossession and eviction measures would be carried out or who would be affected by them. Some naively believed that if they wrote petitions to officials in the village soviet or ECDS explaining their impoverished circumstances, impending exile, and loyalty to the regime, and included signatures of support from their neighbours, the officials would realize that the petitioners were not kulaks, but loyal citizens of the state. All too often, however, the petitions fell on the deaf ears. Mennonite authorities may have taken the time to read these petitions, but most took nc action on them and usually had them stored in village soviet and party files for future reference.[60] Other Mennonites either voluntarily or by force, wrote declarations and confessions for local officials wherein they confessed to their alleged kulak activities and gave details regarding their property holdings (and in some cases, those of relatives and neighbours) in the hope that such statements would grant them a reprieve; their declarations and confessions, however, were often used as evidence against them to justify the decision to dekulakize them. Still other Mennonites took matters into their own hands and sought to reduce their chances of being dispossessed by discreetly liquidating their own property. They believed that by hiding their surplus wheat, converting their assets into easily hidden money and gold, selling or slaughtering their livestock, and selling, damaging, or burning their farm implements and homes they would appear to be poverty-stricken peasants and thus unlikely candidates for dekulakization.[61]

To counteract these self-liquidation schemes, local authorities prohibited individuals from selling their possessions and searched the homes of those who were suspected of hoarding food commodities, gold, or money. This was the case in Chortitza where local officials arrested Mennonites who were accused of stockpiling gold. In villages where slaughtering animals was prohibited, the officials often fined and penalized those who were suspected of committing this crime. At a number of villages in the Molotschna colony, for instance, anyone who was suspected of butchering a calf was fined 60 rubles. Authorities also fined and imprisoned those who were believed to be damaging their own property. In some villages in the Crimea, laws were enacted which prohibited the sale of agricultural machinery.[62] While the authorities hoped that these types of prohibitions would deter, if not stop, these self-liquidation activities, this crime was often difficult to police; consequently, some Mennonites were able to avert possible dekulakization by disposing of their assets.

For numerous Mennonites, however, unsympathetic neighbours and vigilant local authorities prevented self-liquidation schemes from taking place. Many officials took the initiative to ensure that every alleged kulak and expert in their jurisdiction would not be exempted from the dispossession and eviction measures. The dispossession, eviction, and confiscation procedures were often undertaken at night during the winter months by local village officials, 25,000er's, and members of local communist party cells and the CVP, who followed the orders of the regional ECDS to dekulakize particular individuals. They relied on the characterizations of kulak households that were prepared by the village soviets, and had no qualms about evicting Mennonites from their homes and leaving them without money or proper clothing to brave the winter elements.[63] Authorities in some villages permitted Mennonite kulaks and experts to keep most of their personal possessions and clothes; in other villages, however, the alleged enemies of the state were required to surrender all of their property with the exception of the clothes on their backs. Detailed inventories of their possessions (which included everything from the number of milk cows to the number of milk pails that a particular household owned) and their re-sale value were prepared and co-signed by Mennonite representatives from the village soviet, the CVP, the finance commission, the village collective executive, the ECDS, and the local communist party or Komsomol cell. In some cases, authorities required Mennonite kulaks and experts to prepare inventories of their own property which was later seized by the state.[64] Once seized, the surplus clothes and possessions sometimes became the booty of officials who carried out the dispossession and eviction measures. More often, however, the personal property was auctioned off to peasants at fire-sale prices or simply handed over to the local collective. The agricultural machinery that was confiscated from Mennonite kulak farmers was usually sold by the ECDS. In Chortitza, for example, the ECDS often circulated notices advertising the sale of threshing machines, saws, plows, and other equipment that previously belonged to Mennonite landowners.[65]

The expropriated homes of dekulakized Mennonites were also used for a variety of social planning purposes. Poorer peasants and workers in many villages, including Chortitza, Neu-Halbstadt (Sagradowka) and Gnadenfeld (Molotschna), were encouraged to move into the former homes of Mennonite kulaks. In the town of Chortitza, ECDS officials took possession of the larger Mennonite homes as their own accommodation. One of the possible dangers of moving into a dispossessed home, however, was that the new residents could also be characterized as kulaks and subsequently be dekulakized. As a result, the poorer inhabitants quickly learned that they could not accept free handouts or houses if they wanted to avoid the fate of their dekulakized neighbours and relatives. In other villages, however, former kulak residences were appraised and either auctioned off to the local collective at rock-bottom prices or relinquished to the collective at no cost. The collectives subsequently converted the homes into clubhouses, workrooms, kindergartens, schools, livestock stalls, chicken coops, or grain and produce storage bins. In the summer of 1931, for example, a Mennonite from a village in the Chortitza colony reported that many of the former homes of kulaks were now used as cow stalls.[66] Another Mennonite from Halbstadt (Molotschna) pointed out that a number of kulak homes had been converted into cow, horse, and pig stalls, as well as chicken coops. In some villages the more dilapidated residences were simply torn down. Sometimes the materials from these dismantled homes were used to build other structures, but in numerous instances they were used for firewood. The remaining property of the dekulakized farmers -- including land, farm buildings (such as mills, barns, sheds, and stalls), machinery, and livestock -- was either sold or transferred to a local collective farm.[67]

Authorities in some Mennonite settlements were so zealous and heavy-handed in carrying out these dispossession and eviction measures -- particularly in January and February of 1930 -- that it was not uncommon for hundreds of people in a particular district to be dispossessed and evicted in a matter of weeks and sometimes in the space of a few days. This occurred in Osterwick (Chortitza), where 8 Mennonite families were driven out of their homes in the space of a few days in mid-February of 1930. At the same time, 17 Mennonite families from Pawlowka (Chortitza) were evicted from their homes, the majority of whom were subsequently exiled.[68] An *en masse* approach to dekulakization took place in other Mennonite communities, such as Nieder-Chortitza (Chortitza) and Blumengart (Chortitza), where 13 households, almost all of whom were Mennonite, were evicted from their homes and dekulakized in late February 1930. Some weeks later, 17 families were ordered to leave their homes in the village of Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), 22 families in Warwarowka [Zaporizhzhia], and over 230 in the Molotschna colony. In some villages the dispossession and eviction process of Mennonite families was almost a weekly event.[69]

While this process was temporarily put on hold immediately after the publication of Stalin's article "Dizzy with Success" on March 2, 1930, it was widely implemented again by the late spring of 1930, and continued to be carried out in Mennonite communities throughout the duration of the first 5-Year Plan. In Georgstal (Fürstenland [Rohachyk]), for instance, 14 families were reportedly ousted from their residences, forced to sell their homes and property, and required to relinquish the proceeds together with whatever money they had to the authorities in the autumn of 1930. A Mennonite from Halbstadt (Molotschna) related that 11 families were permitted to keep only the clothes they were wearing after they were thrown onto the street in the early spring of 1931. A high number of evictions were also recorded in Hierschau (Molotschna), where at least 20 families (1/3 of the village's population) were evicted from their homes over the 2-year period between 1930 and 1931.[70] Between 1930 and 1933, some villages experienced so many evictions (and subsequent arrests and exiles) that few of the original Mennonite inhabitants still resided in the villages by 1934. In May of 1931, a Mennonite from Halbstadt (Molotschna) reported that of the 1,500 inhabitants that once lived in Halbstadt, there were only 2 or 3 families that still lived in the village. He also noted that non-Mennonite inhabitants from other villages and provinces were moving into Halbstadt and living in the vacant houses of those who had either fled or been evicted. A similar report came from a Mennonite from Pragenau (Molotschna) in January of 1933. He advised that most of the houses in the village were vacant because the former inhabitants had been evicted and exiled. Even in the spring of 1933, some officials continued to press on in their campaign to rid the villages of all alleged enemies of the state. This was the attitude of Mennonite authorities in the Münsterberg (Molotschna) and Blumenstein (Molotschna) village soviets who oversaw the dekulakization of 17 families in each of the villages, the vast majority of whom were Mennonite.[71]

Once having been evicted from his home, a Mennonite kulak or expert who was not immediately arrested, exiled, or executed faced a dismal future of poverty and destitution. With little if any money or personal possessions, the displaced individual now faced the difficult task of finding shelter for himself and his family. This task was especially difficult for dispossessed Mennonite clergymen since retribution was often directed against those who assisted or provided shelter to Mennonite religious leaders. Although some homeless Mennonite clergymen and kulaks found lodgings with relatives and close friends, most were forced to seek other alternatives for shelter. Some families moved into the homes of strangers or homes set aside for the poor. Others took up residence in abandoned buildings or built their own shelters and huts. In Hierschau (Molotschna), for instance, a small group of dispossessed Mennonites (7 adults and 9 children) moved into a cowherder's cottage.

It was not uncommon for evicted individuals to live on the streets and wander from village to village begging for food.[72]

Obtaining adequate food supplies also proved to be impossible for many dispossessed Mennonites. Those who did not have bread ration cards or who were not party members or members of a collective were prohibited from buying food from cooperatives or government-operated stores. Moreover, private businesses and markets were illegal in many villages, making it even more difficult for the dispossessed to obtain food. In order to cope with these restrictions, dispossessed Mennonites had to resort to alternate means of obtaining food: some looked to their friends and relatives to provide them with daily staples, while others bought their food on the black market at increasingly inflated prices. As in 1928 and 1929, the prices of food commodities increased rapidly between 1930 and 1933 in many Mennonite communities in Ukraine and Crimea. During the winter of 1929 and 1930, for instance, the black market price of 1 pood of wheat flour was as low as 6 rubles in some Mennonite villages; by the fall of 1930, however, the price ranged between 20 and 30 rubles in Schönwiese (Chortitza) and in some villages in the Crimea. The black market price for wheat flour rose only slightly in some Mennonite villages in 1931, while in other communities it doubled: in Chortitza the price of a pood of wheat flour ranged between 22 and 35 rubles, in Fischau (Molotschna) it was 30 rubles, in some villages in the Crimea it was 40 rubles, and in Osterwick (Chortitza) it fluctuated between 30 and 60 rubles.[73] It was during the famine years of 1932 and 1933 that the market price of wheat skyrocketed. In 1932, the price of wheat flour stayed close to 65 rubles per pood in some cities in the Kherson region. In other villages, however, the price rose to 2 or even 3 times this amount. This was the case in Neukirch (Molotschna) and Kiev where 1 pood of wheat flour cost between 80 and 120 rubles. The black market price for the same amount of wheat in Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]) and Melitopil' was between 100 and 160 rubles. According to some reports the price of one pood of wheat flour was 200 rubles per pood in the Molotschna colony, while some people in Lichtenau (Molotschna) were selling wheat flour at the unconventional price of 2 rubles per tablespoon. These inflated prices for wheat flour continued into 1933 during which time the price continued to hover around 185 rubles per pood.[74] Few Mennonites, whether they were dekulakized or not, could afford to buy flour at such prices; in many cases, they had to seek other food alternatives such as potatoes, cabbage, or beets for their daily sustenance.

Together with increases in the prices of wheat flour and grain products, the price of other food sources, such as hogs and cattle, also rose rapidly between 1930 and 1933. Although the price of horses remained relatively low during these years -- the average horse sold for 40 to 50 rubles in Alexanderkrone (Molotschna) in 1930 -- the prices of hogs and cattle doubled, and in some regions even tripled. Consumers in Sagradowka and Alexanderkrone (Molotschna) could expect to pay 60 rubles for a piglet, 1,000 rubles for a fat pig, between 200 and 300 rubles for a cow, and between 500 and 900 rubles for a milk cow in 1930.[75] By 1932, the prices of hogs and cattle had also doubled or tripled. The price of a piglet in Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]) ranged between 100 and 150 rubles per pood, and the average cow in Lichtenau (Molotschna) was now worth between 1,000 and 1,200 rubles. Due to the inflated black market prices for beef, pork, and poultry, dekulakized Mennonites who were not exiled often had no alternative but to eat horse meat, wild game, dogs, cats, and even vermin.[76]

Many of the recently evicted Mennonites also relied on food packages sent by friends and relatives in the West in order to survive. The desperate letters from Ukraine and the Crimea compelled individual Mennonites living in Canada, the United States, and Germany to send food parcels and money to their Soviet co-religionists. At the same time, both Mennonite and non-Mennonite relief agencies in these same countries contributed funds that purchased food products such as flour, rice, sugar, macaroni, powdered milk, bacon, and pork to send to the Mennonites in the USSR. Although these relief agencies considered these packages to be free donations to those in need, Soviet Mennonites were not able to obtain them without payment. The authorities in many villages in Ukraine and the Crimea used the relief parcels as a means of extorting additional funds from the community, requiring the already impoverished Mennonite recipients of such packages to pay additional duty charges. The charge for a single parcel in some settlements was tallied at between 5 and 30 rubles, depending on the weight and contents. In other villages, however, the authorities required the inhabitants to pay as much as 500 rubles for a single package.[77] Although western Mennonites and relief organizations later made arrangements to prepay all such duty charges, local functionaries skirted around this problem by levying additional unofficial charges. Sometimes these charges were so high that some Soviet Mennonites found it impossible to pay for them and wrote to their relatives in the West asking them not to send any more packages. Moreover, the authorities frequently rummaged through the contents of the parcels and kept whatever they wanted before handing over the remaining contents to their rightful owners. Many officials made a practice of keeping entire packages for themselves, while others occasionally mailed packages back to the sender with a note stating that the intended recipients did not need the food parcels.[78]

Restrictions were also imposed on those who received aid from outside the Soviet Union. This was the case in 1932 in the Molotschna colony where the Mennonite chairman of the local ECDS routinely harassed those known to have contacts in the West. Local authorities also used the letters and packages as a pretext to accuse the individuals who received them not only of agitating to emigrate to the West, but also of being kulaks. In some villages post office personnel were required to make lists of the Mennonites who received packages from the West. These lists were handed to authorities who subsequently imprisoned or exiled those who were named on the list. In some settlements up to 50 inhabitants were arrested at a time. A number of those who were accused of "agitating for emigration" wrote letters to local officials wherein they explained their innocence and petitioned for clemency. In most cases these petitions were ignored.[79]

Parcels and letters from the West frequently contained western currency which had tremendous buying power in the Soviet Union. Mennonites made the most of this buying power when they used their Canadian and American dollar bills, Reichsmarks, and British pounds to purchase commodities at greatly reduced prices at the Soviet-sponsored Torgsin stores. These stores, which were established in many cities across Ukraine in 1932 and which were closely monitored by Ukrainian communist party organizations, catered almost exclusively to customers with foreign currency.[80] Mennonites who received foreign currency certainly patronized the stores. In reporting on his outstanding purchases at the Torgsin store in the vicinity of Altonau (Sagradowka), a Mennonite noted that he was able to purchase 40 pounds of flour for $2.00 in 1932; another Mennonite in Alexandertal (Molotschna) wrote that he bought 3.5 poods of flour for $5.00 at the Melitopil' store in his area. Commodities other than flour could also be purchased at the Torgsin stores. A Mennonite from the Molotschna colony reported that a person with $10.00 was able to purchase 4 poods of flour, 10 kilograms of lentils, 5 kilograms of sugar, a flask of wine, and 1.5 kilograms of herring at his local store.[81] Mennonites continued to frequent the Torgsin stores in 1933 as well. A Mennonite explained that he was able to purchase 20 pounds of white flour and 22.5 pounds of grits with the $2.50 he received in the mail in 1933. A former Mennonite elder from Rosental (Chortitza) wrote that he purchased 106.5 kilograms of rye flour, 1 kilogram of laundry soap, and 2 chocolates at the Torgsin store after receiving a gift of $9.00 (17.46 rubles) from his relatives. With these kind of prices, Mennonites made use of the Torgsin stores whenever possible.

Because of the strong purchasing power of foreign currency, it was not uncommon for long queues of people to wait to enter the Torgsin stores. Some of these stores, such as the one located near Chortitza in Zaporizhzhia, could only accommodate about 40 people per day; consequently, some Mennonite shoppers had to wait in line for days before they could buy their supplies. These difficulties, in addition to the fact that Mennonites leaving the Torgsin stores were occasionally unjustly accused of shoplifting and subsequently arrested, compelled some Mennonites to avoid doing business at Torgsin. On the whole, however, the relatively inexpensive commodities at the Torgsin stores proved beneficial for so many dekulakized Mennonites that they continued to shop at the store, despite the inherent risks.[82]

For dispossessed Mennonites who did not receive any foreign currency or parcels from outside the USSR, begging was often the only means of obtaining food. Panhandling became a way of life for Mennonite women whose husbands and fathers had been imprisoned, exiled, or executed. Often homeless and penniless, these women tried to feed their children by eking out an existence dependent upon the charity of others. Mennonites regularly gleaned the already harvested fields in the hope of finding grain or vegetables that had been overlooked; they also ate vermin and whatever morsels of food they could scrounge together. Not infrequently, starvation and disease took the lives of those who were forced to survive on such meagre provisions.[83]

Mendicancy was also the fate of some of the Mennonite ministers, elders, and song leaders who had been dekulakized and dispossessed, but not exiled or imprisoned. Regarded as political criminals, the church leaders were usually disenfranchised, evacuated to other villages, forbidden to send their children to school, prevented from joining collectives, and prohibited from obtaining regular employment. Pastors who were still allowed to work in their chosen profession often counted on their congregational members to provide them with food and other necessities; they also relied on their relatives in the West to send them food packages or foreign currency to purchase staples at the Torgsin stores. There were also church leaders, however, who abandoned their ministry and illegally obtained alternate employment in order to survive. A Mennonite minister from the Fürstenland colony [Rohachyk], for example, gave up his ministry in order to work as a blacksmith in a nearby city.[84] Such a course of action was understandable given the intense state pressure on Mennonite pastors to leave the ministry.

Added to the economic pressure to give up their calling, dispossessed ministers were also hounded and harassed by local authorities who sought to compel the ministers to resign from their positions and renounce their faith. For example, a dispossessed Mennonite clergyman who was permitted to live in Chortitza until November of 1934 was repeatedly interrogated and warned ~~by local~~ functionaries and police to stop preaching. Notwithstanding the continual harrying by local officials, this clergyman continued preaching, organizing Bible studies, and baptizing new converts until he was dekulakized in 1934. Other ministers, however, succumbed to the pressure to renounce their faith, and local authorities capitalized on this by publishing their renunciations. A Mennonite preacher from Kleefeld (Molotschna) who was arrested during the trek to Moscow in the fall of 1929 signed a statement stating that he had divorced himself from the preaching profession in order to help build the socialist republic. To make good use of the minister's forced recantation, local officials immediately propagandized the statement in various newspapers. Although the minister immediately renounced the statement after he returned to Kleefeld, the incident nonetheless brought scandal to the Mennonite churches in the village and the surrounding communities. Local authorities also ordered ministers to renounce their faith and discontinue their religious teachings by Easter of 1931; those clergymen who disobeyed the order were threatened with exile.[85]

Mennonite ministers were not the only people to suffer public humiliation and ridicule. Government agencies quickly recognized the value of using local newspapers to identify, characterize, and lampoon those Mennonites who allegedly failed to publicly endorse the Soviet regime or its collectivization and dekulakization programs. In Chortitza, for example, the local newspaper, Stürmer, routinely vilified local Mennonites by publishing their names in articles which identified them as kulaks. The newspaper reporters, some of whom were Mennonites, frequently wrote articles which squarely laid the blame for all the region's agricultural, economic, and social problems on the shoulders of individual Mennonites. Whether the problems dealt with the deplorable condition of horse hygiene on a particular collective farm or with the undermining work of class enemies in the local kindergartens, Mennonites were often castigated in the village paper as the responsible culprits. The newspapers also published excerpts of judgments from court proceedings in which Mennonites were convicted and sentenced to forced labour for their kulak activities. To put additional pressure on the non-conformists, Stürmer published the names of those Mennonites who had publicly supported the various dekulakization measures undertaken against their coreligionists.[86]

The public spectacle of ridicule, disenfranchisement, dispossession, and eviction created a siege mentality in Mennonite communities, and left many of them fractured and in disarray. The state-sponsored terror tactics put immense pressure on ordinary Mennonites to provide incriminating evidence against neighbours, or turn a blind eye to the persecution of those branded as kulaks. Although some Mennonites continued to follow moral imperatives and provided assistance to Mennonite kulaks and preachers, many understandably refused to help in order to avoid drawing unwanted attention to themselves and their families. It was impossible to trust anyone, even family members.

This state of affairs was particularly devastating for Mennonite settlements. As a German-speaking, non-Orthodox minority group which had been surrounded by Russian and Ukrainian populations for more than two centuries, the Mennonites of Ukraine and the Crimea had to depend on each other to survive. Mennonite villages often functioned like extended families, where members of the village provided assistance to those who required help. The realities of Soviet dekulakization, with the very real threat of betrayal from friends and neighbours, made it impossible for Mennonites to trust and depend on each other, and by the early 1930s each Mennonite family had to fend for itself and depend entirely on the its own resources to survive. This disintegration of the kinship, economic, and religious ties between Mennonite settlements, communities, and households quickly led to the demise of the larger Mennonite community per se and resulted in the breakup of the Mennonite community into separate, isolated households.

Taking Stock of the Options

The poverty, suffering, and hardship that accompanied dispossession and eviction compelled Mennonites who had not yet been dekulakized or who had just been dispossessed of their possessions to take stock of the various options which could help them to avoid a life of destitution and possible exile. One option for some Mennonite peasants was to sign on at a local collective, thus surrendering whatever possessions and property they still possessed to the state (see Chapter III).[87]

A second option involved reapplying to the government for permission to emigrate from the country -- a recourse of action which had some success during 1928 and 1929. Some Mennonites were convinced that if they again beseeched Soviet officials to allow them to emigrate there was a possibility of receiving the desired passports. Although the vast majority of Mennonites -- especially those who returned from Moscow in the latter months of 1929 -- believed that it was now futile to seek government permission to emigrate to the West, there were a few Mennonites who made plans to travel to Moscow in the spring of 1930 in order to try to make their way through the emigration maze. Their rationale for this course of action was that in early 1930 the German government had negotiated the release of 132 Mennonites who had been separated from their families in the late fall of 1929. For most Mennonites, however, their aspirations to emigrate to the West never became a reality. By the spring of 1930, the Soviet regime simply ignored Mennonite appeals to emigrate, despite the government's ongoing promise to grant emigration passes to anyone who was eligible.[88]

A third option for Mennonites wanting to avoid the possible fate of resettlement, imprisonment, or exile was to flee to those regions where the dekulakization process was being carried out at a much slower rate. In the case of some Mennonites, this meant moving to nearby cities, especially those with very low unemployment rates. In the case of other Mennonites, it meant moving to another region where local officials were not as vigilant in carrying out their dekulakization programs. Harassed Mennonites from Barwinkowe, the Crimea, and the Molotschna colony, for example, moved to villages in the vicinity of the Memrick [Selydove] colony, a region that was considered to be a place of refuge for kulaks and where there was a widespread shortage of labour. In the spring of 1931, 35 families moved to Kalynove (Memrick [Selydove]), while 80 families resettled in Hrodivka (Memrick [Selydove]). Later in the early spring of 1932, more than 170 families found refuge in Hrodivka.[89] Mennonites from the Molotschna and Chortitza colonies also found temporary refuge after they moved to non-German settlements in the Donets'ke region, particularly in the years between 1931 and 1933. At this time, Mennonites living in settlements near Krasnohirka were allowed to work without being subjected to the dekulakization measures which tormented their friends and relatives in the Molotschna and Chortitza colonies. Other Mennonites from Ukraine found similar respite from the harsh economic and political conditions after they resettled in cities, or alternatively established settlements in the Kuban [Nevinnomyssk], the Caucasus, the province of Saratov, and near Turkestan. Those who settled in these regions were permitted to work for their living and practice their religious faith in relative peace until as late as 1934.[90]

Another way to escape dekulakization was to cross the Soviet border and flee to the West. In 1930, for example, a group of 6 Mennonites made their way across the border into

Poland with the help of a contraband smuggler. Mennonites also travelled to Turkestan where they searched for an escape route out of the USSR via Almaty and Toshkent. Through treacherous mountain passes and blinding snowstorms, Mennonites were able to cross the Soviet border and flee to the Chinese cities of Kuldja and Kashgar [Shufu] between 1930 and 1933. A handful of Mennonite refugees were eventually able to make their way to India, but a group of Mennonites who remained in Kuldja for a number of years were not as fortunate. In 1933, Islamic uprisings erupted in some of the surrounding regions, and by 1934 Islamic rebels in the region attacked Kuldja. In response to the attack, Kuldja officials recruited all of the available men, including Mennonite refugees, between the ages of 18 and 40 for military service. The Mennonites refused to fight because of their pacifist beliefs and were arrested and imprisoned for years. Some of these men and their families were later handed over to the Soviet authorities at the Chinese border.[91]

Crossing the Amur River proved to be another successful escape route out of the Soviet Union that continued to be used after 1930. Although it was becoming increasingly difficult to migrate to the Mennonite settlements near the Chinese border, a few Mennonites from Ukraine reached the Amur region between 1930 and 1933. During the winter months of 1930 and 1931, a number of Mennonites were able to cross frozen stretches of the Amur River and escape to China.[92] Notwithstanding the inherent perils involved in this kind of undertaking, Mennonites risked their lives and those of their families to cross the Amur, believing that losing their life in escaping to the West was better than living in a Stalinist regime.

The Kulak Settlements

For thousands of Mennonites who did not risk escaping from the USSR, there was mounting anxiety about their future. One reason for this apprehension was due to the growing number of Mennonites who had already been forcibly evacuated to other regions in Ukraine and the Crimea. In carrying out their resettlement schemes, authorities sometimes forced disenfranchised, dispossessed Mennonites to relocate to other villages and cities. In the fall of 1930, for instance, a number of Mennonites from villages in the Molotschna colony were required to resettle in Heidelberg, a German Catholic village approximately 20 kilometres north-west of Halbstadt (Molotschna). A similar scenario took place in 1931 when 7 families from Sagradowka were moved to the village of Altonau (Sagradowka) where each family was granted a ½ hectare of land.[93] More often, however, local authorities preferred to send their dispossessed kulaks to specially designated evacuee or kulak settlements. These settlements, which were scattered across Ukraine and the Crimea, were frequently established in the most unproductive agricultural regions and were usually close to major administrative centres that controlled the political and economic affairs of the disenfranchised resettlers. Three of the most well-known evacuee settlements in the Molotschna region were Neuhof, Oktoberfeld, and Chervone Pole. In the Memrick [Selydove] region many Mennonites were sent to the evacuee settlements of Dolynivs'ke and Novokalynove.[94] In the Chortitza-Yazykovo region at least 5 kulak settlements were established at or near the villages of Neuenberg, Blumengart, Burwalde, Osterwick, and Eichenfeld. In planning for these kulak settlements, Mennonite and non-Mennonite members on the executive of the Chortitza ECDS prepared directives for particular village soviets instructing them to set aside a certain amount of the most unproductive land in the area for kulak villages. These directives stipulated that 1 hectare of land would be set aside for each member for a kulak household, with 5 hectares being the maximum amount of land any kulak household could receive regardless of how many members it had. The directives also stipulated how much land in total a village was to allocate for local kulak families:

- Nieder-Chortitza was to set aside 40 hectares for kulaks from Nieder-Chortitza and Blumengart;
- 25 hectares from the government reserve at Blumengart would be used for kulaks from Burwalde and Chortitza;
- Schöneberg was to allot 18 hectares for kulaks from Schöneberg;
- Rosengart and Kronstal were to reserve 89.6 hectares for kulaks from Osterwick, Kronstal, Rosengart, and Novo-Zaporizhzhia;
- 34.3 hectares from the Schönhorst and Neuendorf region, and 55.20 hectares of the government reserve land at Neuendorf would be allocated for the Neuendorf kulaks;
- Neuenberg was to earmark 31.4 hectares for kulaks from Lukashivka;
- Einlage was to set apart 30.85 hectares for kulaks from Einlage;
- 31.68 hectares from Zelenyi-Hai, 31.72 hectares from Veselyi-Yar, and 49 hectares of community land from Chervona-Ukrainka would be allotted for kulaks from Zelenyi-Hai area;
- Dolynivka was to dedicate 25 hectares for kulaks from Dolynivka and Nikolaifeld; and

- an unspecified portion of land was to be allocated for kulaks from Warwarowka, Eichenfeld, and Morozivka.[95]

Eventually the Chortitza ECDS established a number of kulak settlements in 1930, some of which included the following:

Resettlement Nº 1 -- This settlement consisted of 22 kulak households of which 19 were Mennonite. The number of family members in each kulak household determined how much land the household received: families with 3 or fewer members were allotted 3 hectares of land, families with 4 members received 4 hectares and families with 5 to 7 members obtained a maximum of 5 hectares per family. The total amount of land set aside for this settlement amounted to 120.03 hectares. In 1930, the population of the village numbered 98 people.

Resettlement Nº 2 -- This village had 20 kulak households, 18 of which were Mennonite. There was 1 kulak household with 2 family members and it was allotted 2 hectares of land; another family with 4 members received 4 hectares; and the remaining families (which had 5 to 11 members) received a maximum of 5 hectares per family. The total amount of land allotted to this settlement was 109.50 hectares. There were 134 inhabitants in the village in 1930.

Resettlement Nº 3 -- This settlement included 18 kulak households of which 15 were Mennonite. A household with 2 family members was allotted 2 hectares of land; 2 other households with 4 members in each family received 4 hectares per family; and the remaining households (which consisted of 5 to 9 members per family) received 5 hectares per family. Land allocated for this settlement amounted to 89.50 hectares. The population of the village included 117 people in 1930.

Resettlement Nº 4 -- This village consisted of 17 kulak farms. The total amount of land set aside for these families amounted to 83.56 hectares. There were 110 people living in the village.[96]

Since many of the kulak settlements were newly founded villages, there was rarely adequate housing to accommodate all of the resettlers; they often had to construct their own wooden shanties or mud huts upon their arrival in their new settlement. On this small parcel of land, for which the resettled households were required to pay exorbitant taxes, the family members sowed and harvested crops that supplied the bulk of their daily food. In some settlements the kulaks were also allowed to raise livestock for their own use. Resettlers in the evacuee settlement near Neuenberg (Chortitza) were permitted to keep some horses and cattle; in Neuhof (Molotschna) each family was permitted to have a cow and a horse.[97] Because of the difficulties involved in trying to raise livestock on a few hectares of land, however, many of the resettlers reserved all of their land for growing much-needed food.

For almost all evacuated Mennonites, resettlement in kulak villages was tantamount to internal exile -- a life of toil and poverty with very few, if any political, religious, or economic rights and privileges. Adult members of the resettled households were regularly required to do back-breaking work for local officials who were under pressure to complete local construction and community projects on time and under budget. Seldom paid for their labour and routinely treated like slaves, resettlers were forced to work long hours on road and agricultural projects in the area. In addition, local authorities imposed unrealistic grain quotas on kulak settlements, confiscating the resettlers' surplus crops, and occasionally their land, to help make up for regional deficiencies.[98] This occurred in the village of Neuhof (Molotschna) in the spring of 1933 when government officials expropriated the resettlers' land surrounding the village. To compensate for the loss, officials gave each resettled household 5 hectares of uncultivated, weed-infested land 10 kilometres away from the village; the resettlers, however, were not permitted to build houses on their new land, and were restricted to living in Neuhof. Consequently, those Mennonite kulaks who wished to grow crops such as corn, potatoes, sunflowers, or vegetables on their reallotted land regularly had to make a 10-kilometre journey to work their fields. For those who made the long trip to the fields, their efforts were of little avail: the crops were damaged or stolen before they could be harvested.[99]

This kind of harassment and intimidation was not peculiar to the village of Neuhof; it was commonplace in kulak settlements across Ukraine and the Crimea. Authorities in some evacuee villages periodically searched the resettlers' residences for grain and required them to sign statements stating that they were not hiding or withholding any grain from the state. Of course, these searches frequently depleted what little grain the resettlers had, and as a result, they relied largely on their relatives in the West to continue sending them food packages and foreign currency. Those resettlers without Western contacts frequently resorted to begging in order to survive, but even this means of survival was denied to those who lived in kulak settlements (such as the settlement near Neuenberg, Chortitza) that prohibited panhandling.[100]

The hand-to-mouth existence of Mennonites living in evacuee settlements left some so despondent and apathetic about their future that they attempted to take their own lives. Another cause of suicide was the realization that most resettlers in the kulak settlements would sooner or later be imprisoned, exiled to work camps in the northern regions of the

Soviet Union, or in some cases executed. It was the practice in some districts to put the names of Mennonite resettlers residing in kulak settlements at the top of the list of inhabitants to be incarcerated, exiled, or executed.[101] With imprisonment, exile, or execution imminent, a surprising number of resettled Mennonites viewed suicide as their only means of ending their seemingly endless suffering.

The forced resettlement of Mennonites in kulak settlements in Ukraine and the Crimea was an integral element of the Soviet policy to divide and rule the Mennonite community: it weakened the cohesive structure of the Mennonite community by physically separating significant numbers of Mennonite households from their villages. The fracture of Mennonite villages into small, manageable kulak enclaves also decreased the incidence of popular resistance to government policies and made it easier for Soviet officials to manage and monitor Mennonites within their own jurisdictions.

The Soviet kulak settlements, not unlike the Jewish ghettos of World War II, were also a means by which the government could inflict psychological terror on the surrounding communities. Established near Mennonite villages and resembling slave labour camps, the kulak settlements came to be viewed by the larger Mennonite communities as temporary holding areas for those who would eventually be exiled to the gulags. In this respect, the resettlement program became an important factor in softening Mennonite opposition to joining Soviet collective farms: the kulak settlements were blunt examples of what working conditions might be like in the exile camps and of how miserable life would be for those who did not voluntarily join the collective farms.

Life in a Soviet Prison

A significant number of resettled Mennonites were eventually transferred to prisons in Ukraine and the Crimea. The burgeoning caseload of the local courts, which in some regions were under the jurisdiction of Mennonite judges, insured that kulaks were summarily dealt with and punished for the crimes that they had allegedly committed. Of course, Mennonites did not have be members of a kulak settlement to qualify for a jail sentence. Local authorities not only fined, disenfranchised, and dispossessed those Mennonite farmers and clergymen who failed to meet their grain quotas or tax assessments, but also incarcerated them. In some cases, individuals who defaulted on their taxes were only imprisoned for a few weeks or months; in other cases, however, the prison sentences for defaulting on tax payments or grain quotas were much longer.[102] This was the experience of a number of Mennonites from the Chortitza area who were incarcerated for varying periods of time in a Zaporizhzhia prison, usually for not paying taxes or meeting the grain levies. A similar fate befell a Mennonite farmer from the Crimea who was condemned to 1½ years in a Moscow jail because he could not deliver his grain quota in 1930. Likewise, a Mennonite farmer from Baschilitscha (Crimea) was given a 2-year prison sentence because he was unable to supply the amount of grain that he was required to deliver. In 1931 and 1932, prison sentences of varying lengths in duration were handed down to Mennonites who defaulted on their financial obligations. In the early months of 1931, for example, a Mennonite farmer from the Sagradowka area was condemned to 10 months of hard labour in prison and ordered to pay 163 rubles in fines after he was convicted of not complying with an order from officials to sell his possessions, move out of his house, and supply them with a hog weighing at least 5 poods within a 12-hour time period.[103] Similarly, functionaries and judges from the Sagradowka area handed out prison terms ranging from 1½ to 3 years to 7 Mennonites who were unable to meet government-imposed assessments in the autumn of 1931. On the other hand, a Mennonite elder from Ohrloff (Molotschna) was sentenced to 5 years in prison and an additional 5 years in exile after he was unable to pay his 3,000-ruble tax assessment in 1931. A comparable sentence was meted out to another Mennonite elder who was also given a 5-year prison term and a 5-year term in exile when he failed to pay 4,200 rubles in taxes and penalties in 1931.[104] When deciding which individuals would receive prison terms for committing tax or grain quota violations and what length those terms would be, local authorities and judges seldom followed any standard policy, other than the conviction that incarceration was an expedient means of ridding the community of Mennonite enemies of the state.

Tax and grain quota violations were not the only legal grounds that officials used to put undesirables into custody. By loosely interpreting the criminal code, concocting fallacious accusations, and issuing trumped-up criminal charges, authorities had almost unrestricted power to arraign Mennonites and keep them in custody for extended periods of time. In the early months of 1930, for example, Mennonite clergymen from the Molotschna colony were incarcerated after authorities alleged that the ministers were spreading anti-Bolshevik propaganda and acting as counter-revolutionaries. Similarly, Mennonites were interned for possessing letters and foreign currency from Europe and North America. Such was the fate of several Mennonites from the Rosental (Chortitza) area who were imprisoned in April 1931 and later exiled after their homes were searched by activists who discovered letters and photographs from the West.[105] The same was true for a Mennonite minister from Chortitza who was kept in custody in 1931 because he received money from Canada and attempted to distribute it among the poorer Mennonite ministers in area. Furthermore, 3 Mennonites from Ohrloff (Molotschna) were immured in 1932 because they were accused of possessing American dollar bills, notwithstanding the fact that no American money was ever found in their possession. During the course of the same year, Mennonites from Franzfeld (Chortitza) were required to hand over their money and gold if they wished to avoid being imprisoned. They were advised that the seized money and gold was going to be used for the construction of the socialist state.[106]

There were also Mennonites who received long prison terms and death sentences for allegedly committing acts of resistance or crimes against the state. In the village of Neuendorf (Chortitza), for instance, Mennonites were incarcerated after a group of Mennonite women joined forces with women from the Ukrainian village of Mykhailivka and mounted riders from other villages to form a human blockade in order to prevent GPU officials from entering Neuendorf. Although the women were able to keep the officials out of the village for 2 days, they and their husbands were severely punished following the break-up of the blockade by the police.[107] In Waldheim (Molotschna), on the other hand, Mennonites who were charged with petty misdemeanours (such as gleaning wheat they found in already-harvested fields) were given 7- to 10-year prison terms, and in some cases executed in the fall of 1932. Disproportionately severe sentences for minor infractions were not uncommon in Mennonite settlements where officials were given free rein to interpret the criminal code and had no qualms about incarcerating individuals on little or no evidence.[108]

The village officials' lack of respect for the most fundamental principles of justice, combined with the pressure from the government to liquidate the kulak class, translated into the imprisonment of thousands of Mennonites in overcrowded prisons between 1930 and 1933. Village officials in some Mennonite communities were so zealous in arresting anyone who was suspected of being a kulak or expert that many of the local prisons were filled to capacity soon after the state-sponsored dekulakization campaign began. In the early spring of 1931, for example, one Mennonite inmate reported that while serving his sentence in a Kharkiv prison, he was confined with 200 people in a cell that was designed to hold only 75 men. This kind of experience was also shared by a Mennonite from the Crimea who was housed with over 2,500 people in a prison that was intended to hold only 400 inmates.[109] In attempting to remedy this shortage of prison space, authorities in some regions converted warehouses, factories, barns, and even homes into makeshift jails. Such was the case in Chortitza, where local officials appropriated the Hildebrandt factory, which had formerly been owned by a Mennonite, and used it as a prison and holding area for those about to be exiled. By the late spring of 1931, there were between 400 and 600 people incarcerated in the Hildebrandt factory on a given day. A similar solution was also used to deal with the problem of overcrowded prisons in the Molotschna colony. In the spring of 1931, local officials took vengeance on some kulak settlements in the Molotschna region and arrested all of the men between the ages of 16 and 65; because of a shortage of prison space, around 700 of the detainees were interned in barns and basements in the village of Halbstadt (Molotschna) until they were eventually exiled to work camps in the north.[110]

Apart from the unsanitary conditions and limited living space associated with the overcrowded prisons, the daily food rations for the prisoners left incarcerated Mennonites in desperate straits. This was because prison rations, if and when they were available, were spartan and undernourishing. A Mennonite reported that during his prison stay in 1931 he received tea and ¾ pound of bread for breakfast, a bowl of watered-down, sour soup with corn porridge for lunch, and tea and 3 or 4 ladles of dry millet porridge at supper. Other imprisoned Mennonites received even less. While languishing in a Kharkiv prison in 1932 and 1933, a Mennonite inmate daily received ¾ pound of bread and some green salt soup. A Mennonite woman from the Crimea was given only a ½ pound of bread per day by her guards during her internment in 1932.[111] To add insult to injury, some prison officials required their Mennonite inmates to purchase their daily rations and supplies, and punished those prisoners who lacked the funds to pay. By way of example, a Mennonite woman reported in 1931 that the inmates at the penitentiary where her husband was kept were required to contribute money for their living expenses. She also stated that when a convict was unable to pay his prison costs, he was usually brought to a local court where witnesses routinely provided false testimony that resulted in the prisoner being found guilty of additional criminal offences.[112] As a result of this practice, a number of Mennonite inmates received additional prison terms every time they or their relatives failed to pay the fees demanded by penitentiary authorities.

To help Mennonite convicts cope with these dismal circumstances, spouses and relatives often travelled long distances to bring their incarcerated loved ones food parcels on a weekly or monthly basis. A Mennonite woman from the Kherson region, for example, regularly made a 60-kilometre journey in order to bring food to her husband in prison. At many jails, spouses who brought food were not permitted to visit their imprisoned husbands or wives, and thus surrendered food packages to prison authorities in the hope that the guards would deliver the packages to the intended recipients. All too often, however, the guards ransacked the packages before surrendering them to their rightful owners. Mennonite inmates often received only morsels of the food that was originally prepared for them; consequently, Mennonite prisoners whose food parcels were periodically plundered by the guards were seldom better off than those convicts who did not receive any parcels at all.[113]

For incarcerated Mennonites who were prohibited from receiving food parcels or routinely denied daily prison rations, their prognosis for surviving their jail term looked very dismal indeed. Mennonite inmates at some penitentiaries in Ukraine and the Crimea were left to starve for days and even weeks at a time. Food shortages were one of the reasons for this inhumane treatment; another reason was that prison authorities occasionally withheld rations from the prisoners in order to punish them or force them to sign confessions of guilt. This was the experience of a Mennonite and his son who were imprisoned in Melitopil' in February of 1932. After being interrogated by the officials, the man and his son were beaten, forced to stand with their faces against the wall for 4 days, and denied any food during the entire ordeal.[114] Other incarcerated Mennonite men from Franzfeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]) were treated in a similar fashion; they were given only a little bread and water in the interrogation cells of the local prison.

Along with denying prisoners sufficient food provisions, prison guards also tormented their convicts: they forced prisoners to remain standing in a room for 10 or 20 days, shoved needles under the prisoners' fingernails, and forced prisoners into closets lined with electric light bulbs which burned them with any slight movement. Some guards also tortured their prisoners by denying them all food rations until they starved to death. At a prison located near Halbstadt (Molotschna), for instance, several Mennonite convicts reportedly starved to death in 1931. In describing the plight of the prisoners in the Halbstadt prison, a Mennonite explained that many of the prisoners were given nothing to eat, and that some "prisoners had prayed that the guards would not open the door of the prison cell to let in fresh air because they wanted to die sooner and be put out of their misery."[115] Hunger and death by starvation were also daily realities at prisons in the Chortitza region. In May of 1931, a Mennonite from Osterwick (Chortitza) wrote that the people who were incarcerated in a factory in Chortitza received no food, only water. The consequences of this harsh treatment were noted by a Mennonite from Kronsweide (Chortitza) who wrote that corpses from the Hildebrandt factory (Chortitza) were occasionally transported to Kronsweide for burial. While it is true that some prisons allowed inmates who were very ill to be treated at a local hospital, this medical attention usually came too late to be of any real use.[116]

Although local officials were provided with specific quotas of how many individuals from each region were to be incarcerated and exiled, there is little available evidence that outlines what criteria these officials were to use to determine who would be imprisoned and who would be exiled. In the sentences handed down by the People's Court throughout Mennonite-populated regions, individuals could be executed, imprisoned, or exiled for committing almost any offence. Most of the resolutions passed by the ECDS in the Chortitza region, on the other hand, called for the resettlement or exile of the enemies of the state; very few resolutions called for the sentence of imprisonment. In some of the resolutions passed by the village soviets in the Chortitza and Molotschna regions, the process of determining who was to be imprisoned as opposed to resettled, exiled, or executed was based on the arbitrary whims of influential members of the village soviets rather than on specific criteria provided by the state.

The Alternative Military Service Program

Torture, suffering, hunger, and death in prison was the tragic fate of many Mennonites in Ukraine and the Crimea between 1930 and 1933. This experience, however, was not confined to the Mennonites languishing behind prison walls. It was also shared by Mennonite men born between 1904 and 1911 who were conscientious objectors and who were required to perform alternative or military service for the Soviet Union between 1930 and 1933. These conscientious objectors were initially under the command of local units of the Workers and Peasants Red Army. Responsible for recruitment in their respective jurisdictions, local units of the Red Army directed surrounding village soviets to collect military taxes and to register and provide lists of the names and ages of all potential recruits in the region who qualified for military training or the conscientious objector program. The village soviets were advised that those who were unacceptable for any kind of military service included individuals who had: a) a kulak background or parents who had been disenfranchised; b) an unacceptable social background because their father was a pastor, businessman, large landowner, factory owner, or conscientious objector during World War I; c) a criminal record; d) an antagonistic attitude toward collectivization, grain quota campaigns, and the activities of the local soviet; or e) an inferior moral character, such as a suspected hooligan. The Red Army also advised village soviets that any Mennonites who were dekulakized while serving in the military were to be dismissed immediately from the service.[117]

While few Mennonites qualified for regular military service, many Mennonites were required to work for the military in the alternative service program in 1930 and 1931. For these men, life was not much better than for those serving prison sentences. Forced to live and work in extremely trying conditions, Mennonites who were forced to work in the alternative service program experienced hunger, deprivation, and in some cases death. For some Mennonite men, these difficulties started even before their 2-year period of alternative service began. Stiff prison terms were often handed down to those who refused to report for alternative or military service after they had been called to report to the Red Army. This was the experience of a Mennonite youth from Friedensfeld (Sagradowka) who was sentenced to spend 2½ years in a Kherson prison after he refused to enlist in the military service in December 1930.[118] For Mennonites who did report and enlist in the service program in 1930 and 1931, a significant number were forced to live in deplorable conditions, do backbreaking work, and listen to numerous hours of political instruction. This was the common lot of Mennonite men who worked on dam projects located along the Dnieper River near the Chortitza colony. Required to work long hours all year round and supplied with very few tools, these men were given the task of digging tunnels and building railway lines. What made this service work bearable for some Mennonites was that a number of the Dnieper work projects were near Mennonite settlements which allowed the men to visit their families and friends on their days off.[119]

There were cases where the working and living conditions at alternative service projects were tolerable in 1930 and 1931. At a number of project sites the quality of food was superior to that served at other camps, fewer lectures in political instruction were delivered, and religious holidays were observed. In some cases, recruits were even allowed to attend military training school and receive advanced training. As well, the Soviet government took some steps to improve the lot of conscientious objectors when it made amendments to the Military Service Law No. 424 in August of 1930. Among other things, the amendments stated that a tribunal court hearing an application for exemption from regular military service was required to make its decision known to the applicant between 6 and 24 months before the applicant's age group was due to be drafted.[120] This requirement, however, was routinely ignored by military officials who only advised the Mennonite men of their status a few days before they were to report for service.

By 1931 it also became clear that the Soviet regime, instead of improving the rights and privileges of conscientious objectors, was actually planning to curtail them. This was evident when Mennonite men were required to work for 3 years in the alternative service program rather than the usual 2-year term. This change in the length of the assignment was because the government viewed these men as disenfranchised, and were to be categorized as "military reserves in the rear" (MRR). As MRR's, the men were frequently treated as third-class citizens with few rights or privileges. At the same time, the Soviet government put enfranchised conscientious objectors who were in the regular 2-year alternative service program under the direction and jurisdiction of the Soviet commissariat for the military in the latter months of 1931. The result of this change in administration in the alternative service program was that the enfranchised conscientious objectors were required to wear military uniforms, ordered to follow military discipline, commanded by military leaders, and forced to attend numerous lectures in political instruction. The enfranchised conscientious objectors were essentially treated as though they were MRR's, and were routinely denied their rights and privileges as enfranchised citizens. In many respects, these fundamental changes in the alternative service program marked not only the beginning of a new period of oppression for those still enlisted in the program, but also the beginning of the end of government support for a separate alternative service program.[121]

Apart from the ongoing disregard for the rights of conscientious objectors, another indication that the government was losing interest in the alternative service program was when it began to transport Mennonite alternative service workers to distant regions of the Soviet Union in late 1931 and early 1932. Hundreds of Mennonite MRR's were sent to Korosten', Bekhy, and Ihnatpil' in the Kiev region where they were required to crush and load gravel. The men at these work sites were ordered to fill impossible work quotas, lived in overcrowded barracks, and were routinely underfed -- sometimes to the point of starvation. The conditions in some work camps were so intolerable that the men had to beg for food in nearby villages in order to survive; those who were unsuccessful in their efforts usually died from hunger and overexertion. Mennonite MRR's from Ukraine and the Crimea were also required to work on the railways lines near Nizhniy Novgorod, build railway ties at Khabarovsk, or labour in the coal mines near Vladivostok and Artemovsk. Here they also experienced sickness, hunger, and death.[122] In describing his alternate service work in

Artemovsk, one Mennonite provided the following recollections:

> On December 26, 1932 about 250 Mennonite conscientious objectors...[who were working in the region of Kiev] with about 500 Russians who were disenfranchised were loaded into freight cars with between 36 and 40 men per car....[During the trip]... we received no bread and only a little soup.... On February 9, 1933 we arrived at Artemovsk half-starved.... Three times a day we received soup with some millet gruel which tasted like fish. We received 800 grams of bread once a day.... Our battalion was assigned to work coal mine No. 3.... During the 8-hour [work period] we did not eat .... [and] whoever did not fill his quota in 8 hours had to work another eight hours, without food, of course.... Some of the men who worked in the service had died in the meantime.[123]

For many Mennonite MRR's in 1932 and 1933, alternative service was no better than imprisonment or exile.

Although the original mandate of the alternative military service program was to provide an opportunity for Mennonite conscientious objectors to serve their country on agreed terms and conditions, this was no longer the case by the early 1930s. The program had become a means by which the government obtained young, expendable slave labour to work on government projects. The treatment of those in the program was no different than those in kulak settlements and exile camps; yet most Mennonites participants had not been previously characterised as kulaks or experts. In essence, it was a 2 to 3 year sentence of hard labour, suffering, and premature death -- an experience which was not shared by the majority of Red Army recruits. Because the program was peculiar to the Mennonite community, it was an additional source of slave labour for the government that virtually was nonexistent in most Russian and Ukrainian settlements.

Exiling the Enemies of the State

Mennonites who were not recruited into alternative service or imprisoned between 1930 and 1933 often became candidates for exile to the northern reaches of the Soviet Union. As was noted above, soon after Stalin's call for the liquidation of the kulak class in December 1929, senior officials from the CC CP(b)U, the GPU, and other government agencies provided local authorities in many regions of Ukraine and the Crimea with specific directives as to how many kulak households were to be exiled.[124] Soon after these directives were issued Mennonites from across Ukraine and the Crimea were exiled to work camps outside Ukraine, a process which began in January and February of 1930, but which was stepped up significantly in late March and April of that same year. The exile or resettlement campaigns continued in the remaining months of 1930, although not always on the same scale as campaigns carried out in March and April. Between 1931 and 1933 the time of year appears to have played a determining factor as to when the majority of people were resettled beyond the borders of Ukraine and the Crimea; as some Mennonites observed, more people were usually exiled after the spring seeding was completed or after the harvest work was finished.[125] The logistics of running a collective farm sometimes took precedence over government directives.

When deporting local inhabitants, village authorities often used their own discretion in determining which inhabitants would be exiled. In some Mennonite communities, such as Pawlowka (Chortitza), Fürstenwerder (Molotschna), and Rosental (Chortitza), the first to be put on the resettlement list were those inhabitants who were considered to be better off than their neighbours, former businessmen, large landowners, and factory owners.[126] In other communities, the first inhabitants to be sentenced to years in exile were those Mennonites who had previously been moved to kulak settlements. In almost all Mennonite communities the punishment of exile was handed down to clergymen, who were viewed as a dangerous threat to the Sovietization of the Mennonite countryside. In Spat [Oktiabrs'ke, Crimea] in the early spring of 1930, for instance, two Mennonite ministers, who were also members of the KfK, were resettled in Arkhangel'sk for a 10-year period because of their involvement in Mennonite religious affairs. Later in 1932, a Molotschna Mennonite from Mariental was fined 5,000 rubles and exiled from Ukraine for 5 years because of his religious faith. Other Mennonites who were routinely sentenced to several years in exile were former members of Mennonite emigration committees or were characterized as "emigration agitators."[127]

Similarly, Mennonites who were not members of a collective, who were accused of committing crimes against the state, or who had obtained packages or currency from the West often found themselves on freight trains bound for the north. Non-collectivized Mennonites in some of the villages in the Molotschna region, for instance, were exiled in 1930 and 1931 because they refused to join local kolkhozes. In the Schlachtin-Baratov colony [Sofiïvka], a Mennonite who was wrongfully accused of starting a fire in 1930 was condemned to spend 6 years in exile. In 1931, several Mennonite inhabitants from one village were exiled because they possessed goods made in the West and were accused of "obtaining their possessions at the expense of foreign workers."[128] Usually, however, the punishment of exile was imposed on those who failed to meet their taxes, grain quotas, or fines. This was the punishment for a Mennonite from Grünfeld (Schlachtin-Baratov

[Sofiïvka]) who was unable to meet the 400-pood grain quota required in the spring of 1930. In 1931, similar sentences were handed down to a Mennonite farmer who failed to deliver 500 rubles in taxes and a few hundred weight of meat to government authorities, and to 32 men from Tomakivka (Chortitza) who were shipped to Solovetskiye Ostrova because they could not fill a meat quota. Insignificant infractions of the law could also result in a long term in exile. This was the fate of a Mennonite from the Kherson region who was banished to the Caucasus in 1932 after he failed to pay a 25-ruble fine.[129]

After characterizing those whom they thought should be exiled, local authorities then went about the task of ensuring that those so selected were swiftly expelled from Crimean and Ukrainian territory. To accomplish this, officials convened a meeting of the village soviet, or alteratively of all enfranchised members of the community to rubber-stamp the proposed list of exile candidates. After obtaining village approval, the officials usually went to the households of those to be exiled, arrested all of the adult males in each family, and temporarily incarcerated them in prisons, converted factories (such as the Hildebrandt factory in Chortitza), warehouses, or cellars located under specifically designated homes. Sometimes the men were held for only a brief period of time, as was the experience of 7 men from a Crimean Mennonite village who spent only a few hours in a local holding cell before they were moved to a nearby train station and then transported north to an exile camp. Often, however, the men were incarcerated for weeks or months at a time, interrogated by GPU and local officials throughout this period, and then eventually exiled. Mennonite men, for example, were arrested and imprisoned after spring seeding in early May of 1931, interrogated by GPU officials in June, but not exiled until late July of that same year.[130] In many cases, the incarcerated were beaten and tortured while they waited to be transported to the exile camps. Such was the experience of an exiled Mennonite from an evacuee settlement in the Molotschna colony who provided the following description of his arrest, incarceration, and subsequent exile in a letter dated July 15, 1931:

> At 3 a.m. on May 18, 1931, all of the men who were from Neuhof, Oktoberfeld, and Krasnopolye [Chervone Pole]... and who were between 18 and 65 years old were arrested... brought to Halbstadt, and incarcerated in cellars. Kulaks from other villages were arrested. In Halbstadt there were 324 arrested men. For meals, we received nothing to eat except a cup of tea in the evening. We ate only what our relatives brought to us... which was frequently ransacked by the guards.... Over the next 6 weeks all of the men were interrogated by the GPU. The questions dealt with what our fathers did for a living, what we did for a living, how much we paid in taxes, whether we served in the White [Army].... [If one did not answer the way in which the authorities wanted] then one stood on a stool or in the corner for 7 days without

> sleep, without food or water, and under guard. Some people went like this for 8 or 9 days, and if they fell asleep they were awakened with punches to the ribs....
>
> Finally, on June 24 the arrested men were told that they would be reunited with their families and that they and their families would be banished to the Urals.[131]

Many of these soon-to-be-exiled Mennonite men would also be required to sign statements declaring that they and their families were voluntarily abandoning their homes and property in order to cultivate the land in the northern territories, help improve Soviet industry, and work on behalf of the Soviet state.[132] After signing the statements, the men were usually brought to a local train station where they were loaded into cattle cars and subsequently transported to the exile camps.

When Mennonite men were arrested and temporarily imprisoned before being exiled, their wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters were often left on their own until local authorities made a final decision concerning their fate. Sometimes the authorities did nothing; often, however, they ordered the women to pack some food and clothing for their families, confiscated their remaining possessions, and eventually evicted the women and children from their homes.[133] What made this situation especially difficult for these Mennonite women were the unanswerable questions of what the immediate future held in store for them and their families. Would their husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers be kept in prison or exiled? If the men were to be exiled, when would this occur? Would the men be resettled without their families? If the women and children were also to be exiled, would they be exiled at the same time and to the same place as their menfolk? How soon could they expect to be exiled?

Not knowing the answers to these questions compelled many women to keep their bags packed in anticipation that the authorities could come at any time to take them to the train station. In some instances, the authorities warned the women several days or weeks in advance that they and their families would be resettled. All too often, however, the women were only given a few minutes, or a few hours to pack whatever possessions and food they would need in the work camps. What exacerbated the process of packing their personal possessions were the strict government restrictions concerning the amount of luggage each exiled family was allowed to take with them. In 1930, for example, local officials in Mennonite communities in both the Crimea and Molotschna limited each kulak household about to be exiled to between 30 and 35 poods of baggage, regardless of how many members were in the household. In addition, local officials usually ordered each household to bring food and specific work tools with them. Some Mennonite families from Spat [Oktiabrs'ke, Crimea], for example, were each required to take along a saw, a spade, 2 belts, and food provisions for 3 months when they were exiled in March of 1930. Another family from the same village was also told to pack a hammer, a saw, a hatchet, and enough food to feed the family for a 3-month period.[134] Later in 1931, officials in a number of Mennonite communities sharply decreased the maximum weight of baggage a family was permitted to take to the camps. Some of those affected by these new luggage restrictions were Mennonite households from kulak settlements near Neuhof, Oktoberfeld, and Chervone Pole. When they were exiled in late June of 1931, each household was allowed to bring only 20 poods of baggage -- this 20 pood limit was to include the 3-month supply of food commodities that officials required each household to bring. The luggage restrictions were even more severe in other Mennonite villages in Ukraine. In one village, for instance, authorities allowed each Mennonite family a maximum of 5 poods of flour and 9 poods of personal possessions for the trip north.[135] Such reductions in the amount of luggage that households were permitted to take into exile often decreased the likelihood of their survival in the far reaches of the Soviet Union.

Another factor that complicated the exile process revolved around what to do with kulak children: should the younger children of dekulakized Mennonites be resettled with their parents or remain at home in the care of relatives or other village inhabitants? In some villages such as Sagradowka, the preadolescent children of exiles were usually required to remain in their home village on the condition that whoever took charge of them signed a statement promising to take good care of the children. In other villages, however, government officials made unilateral decisions to separate younger children from their soon-to-be-exiled parents and place them in pro-soviet households. This decision was usually based on the rationale that separating these children from their kulak parents and keeping them in their home villages with properly socialized peasants would insure a drastic decrease in the propagation of the kulak class. Some officials also believed that it was possible to train a child to be a good Soviet citizen, even if that child had been born into a kulak household. The thought of being exiled without their children naturally brought grief and despair to most Mennonite parents, some of whom eventually suffered from severe depression or committed suicide.[136]

After the decision was made as to whether the younger children were to be exiled with their parents, local officials often loaded the exile candidates and their baggage into automobiles or horse-drawn wagons and transported them to the nearest train station under armed guard. The trip to the station sometimes lasted several days and took place even in the most terrible of weather conditions. It was also a particularly traumatic experience for those women and children whose husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers were still incarcerated in local holding cells; they had no idea as to where they were going or whether they would see their loved ones again. Some women and children were fortunate enough to be reunited with their menfolk at the train station. For other women, however, their worst fears came true when they learned that their men had already been exiled without them. To add further consternation, some officials confiscated the few remaining possessions the families had managed to bring to the station. To prevent panic and riots, the officials often lied to the families, telling them that they were being resettled in other regions in the Crimea and Ukraine rather than in work camps in the northern USSR.[137]

Separating Mennonite men from their families before they were exiled was another manifestation of the divide and rule policy of local Soviet authorities. Incarcerating Mennonite men in makeshift holding cells and leaving the women to prepare their families for the trip into exile proved to be an effective means of destabilizing Mennonite households and ensuring their compliance with exile orders. Without their menfolk, few Mennonite families resisted the exile process or attempted to flee to safer regions. By using the incarcerated Mennonite men as bait, local officials also found it relatively easy to coax entire families to move their packed belongings to local train stations where they would board trains bound for gulags across the USSR. Often unaware of what was about to happen to them, most Mennonites who were selected for exile were only concerned about the promises from local officials that they would be reunited with their loved ones at the train station. Local authorities routinely exploited this form of psychological manipulation to facilitate the transfer of thousands of Mennonites out of Ukraine.

How Many Were Exiled?

Between 1930 and 1933, the number of Mennonites loaded onto trains destined for exile work camps varied significantly from village to village and region to region. One reason for this was that local authorities interpreted the same government directives differently and often employed their own criteria in determining which individuals and households were to be exiled. Another explanation for the variations can be found in collections of documents that provide some record of the exile process. One such collection is the Captured German

War Documents (CGWD), a compilation of microfilmed village reports of German settlements in Ukraine that were prepared by special forces commando unit under the direction of Karl Stumpp during the Nazi occupation of Ukraine between 1941 and 1943. The village reports in the CGWD attempted to document the life of Soviet Mennonites and Germans in the 1930s and included data concerning the number of village inhabitants that were exiled between 1930 and 1933. One of the inherent weaknesses of these documents is that they were compiled more than a decade after the first trainloads of resettlers were exiled to the north, and this in turn calls into question their accuracy.[138] Furthermore, when the data from the CGWD are compared with information from other sources (such as letters from Soviet Mennonites that were published in North American Mennonite newspapers, the protocols of meetings from village soviets, and the orders of the local ECDS, communist party cells, and other Soviet agencies to exile particular Mennonite households) the CGWD figures concerning the numbers of Mennonites exiled between 1930 and 1933 are often significantly lower than those obtained from these other sources. For example, while CGWD village reports state that no one was exiled from either Grünfeld (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]) or Neu-Halbstadt (Sagradowka) and that only 1 person was exiled from Steinfeld (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]) in 1930; on the other hand, published letters from Mennonites living in these areas at the time report that at least 7 families from Steinfeld (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]), 7 families from Grünfeld (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]), and a number of Mennonites from Neu-Halbstadt (Sagradowka) were exiled, some of whom were sent to the Vologda work camps in late February 1930.[139] .

This is not to say, however, that all CGWD village reports underestimate the number of Mennonite exiles. Some of the village reports indicate that some Mennonite communities suffered the loss of a significant number of inhabitants. For example, village reports indicate that 11 inhabitants were banished from Burwalde (Chortitza), 13 from Neu-Chortitza (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]), 14 from Einlage (Chortitza), 16 from Blumengart (Chortitza), and Friedensfeld (Borozenko [Kamianka]) respectively, and 20 from Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]).[140] There are also some CGWD village reports which include especially high tallies of exiled Mennonites: 30 people were exiled from Osterwick (Chortitza), 31 from Hochfeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), 36 from Karlynivka [Verkhniodniprovs'ke], 53 from Neuendorf (Chortitza), and 59 from Franzfeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]).[141]

The published Mennonite letters also provide some indication of how extensive the exile process was in those areas which were never apparently documented in the CGWD village reports. For example, one Mennonite wrote that 16 families from Boronivka (Ignatievo [Dzerzhyns'ke]) and 27 families from Borrisso (Ignatievo [Dzerzhyns'ke]) were resettled in the early months of 1930. Similarly, a letter from Spat [Oktiabrs'ke, Crimea] described the scenario in this community when 24 Mennonite families were exiled to work camps in the north on April 24, 1930.[142] There were also many letters describing the large-scale campaign to exile approximately 450 people from villages in the Molotschna region. These families were loaded on trains at the Lichtenau station on April 1, 1930 and subsequently transported to work camps in the north; included in this group were families from Blumstein, Lidenau, Muntau, Schönau, Ohrloff, Tiege, Altonau, and Münsterburg. Because local authorities often implemented the exile campaigns within their jurisdictions haphazardly and inconsistently, it was impossible to predict how many inhabitants in a particular community would be exiled, and which communities would ultimately bear the brunt of this campaign.[143]

Information in the protocols of particular village soviets and the Chortitza ECDS also does not always square with the data in the CGWD village reports. For example, CGWD village reports state that 6 inhabitants from Nieder-Chortitza (Chortitza) and 16 inhabitants from Blumenort (Chortitza) were exiled in 1930. On the other hand, the minutes of the meeting of the village soviet for Nieder-Chortitza (Chortitza) and Blumengart (Chortitza) state that on February 24, 1930 alone the decision was made to exile 5 Mennonite families out of Ukraine and 3 Mennonite families out of the region. The minutes also indicate that additional families from these communities were exiled later that same year. As was noted above, the decision of a local soviet to exile a Mennonite household outside of Ukraine had to be ratified by the presidium of the local ECDS. In the early months of 1930, for instance, it was not uncommon for the Chortitza ECDS to draft long lists of dekulakized Mennonites, many of whom were slated for exile.[144] One of the longest lists was prepared in late February of 1930 when the presidium of the ECDS ratified orders which dekulakized and, in the majority of cases, led to the exile of hundreds of Mennonite households from the Chortitza area. In this respect, ECDS data pertaining to the number of Mennonites exiled from the Chortitza region in the spring of 1930 appear to be higher than the numbers provided in CGWD for the entire year. In some cases, the same holds true for the years 1931 to 1933, where available ECDS records of Mennonites exiled during this time appear to be higher than the number of Mennonite exiles listed in the CGWD.[145]

Given some of the obvious disparities between the CGWD and other sources in matters involving exile statistics, does this mean that the data provided by the CGWD cannot be trusted or utilized? As was noted above, information in the CGWD was collected more than a decade after the first exile trains left for the north, whereas the published letters of Ukrainian and Crimean Mennonites, the protocols of village soviets, and the orders and list of the ECDS were prepared contemporaneously during the exile campaigns. Of course, it would be preferable to rely exclusively on the protocols of village soviets and the ECDS for the final tally as to how many Mennonites from Ukraine and Crimea were actually exiled between 1930 and 1933. At the present time, however, this is not possible. Despite the opening up of Ukrainian and Russian archives and libraries to Western scholars in the past few years, some state archives in Ukraine are still not willing to release all of the available data on this subject to Western historians at this time. Until they are prepared to do so, data from the CGWD used in conjunction with Mennonite letters and available protocols from village soviets and local ECDS can serve a useful purpose as a general guideline in determining the extent of the exile campaigns in the Mennonite communities, especially for the period between 1931 and 1933.

Having said that, determining how extensively the exile process affected Mennonite communities in 1931 and thereafter is not an easy task -- especially since state archives in Ukraine have made few documents available that address the scope of ECDS and village soviet exile programs that were implemented after 1930. Despite these shortcomings, the available documentation does make it clear that widespread disparities in the number of peasants exiled from the various Mennonite communities in Ukraine and the Crimea continued to exist in 1931, reflecting the unsystematic and erratic manner in which the exile process was carried out in different regions. For example, reports from the CGWD indicate that the villages of Alexanderkrone (Sagradowka), Blumengart (Chortitza), Neu-Schönsee (Sagradowka), Neuenberg (Chortitza), Nieder-Chortitza (Chortitza), and Schöndorf (Borozenko [Kamianka]) were apparently spared the exile process, and thus saw none of their inhabitants banished. Other villages, such as Blumenort (Sagradowka), Franzfeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Friedensfeld (Sagradowka), Friedensfeld (Borozenko [Kamianka]), Kronstal (Chortitza), Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Nikolaifeld (Sagradowka), and Steinfeld (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiivka]) only witnessed 1 exile each.[146] Relatively low exile rates were also reported in other villages: in Adelsheim (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]) and Rosengart (Chortitza) 2 inhabitants were exiled from each village; in Schönhorst (Chortitza)

3 villagers were sent to the north; in Orloff (Sagradowka) and Reinfeld (Sagradowka) 4 people were banished from each village; and in Neuendorf (Chortitza) 6 villagers were resettled.[147] Slightly higher rates of exile, however, occurred in other Mennonite villages. There were 9 villagers exiled from Altonau (Sagradowka), for example, and in Chortitza, Einlage (Chortitza), and Schönau (Sagradowka) 10 people were banished from each village. Similar scenarios took place in Rosenort (Sagradowka), where 11 people were exiled, and in Karlynivka [Verkhniodniprovs'ke] and Neu-Halbstadt (Sagradowka), where 12 villagers were banished from each community.[148] According to Mennonite letters published at this time, exile campaigns in other communities were carried out with much greater vengeance. In late June of 1931, for example, over 300 men and their families from the kulak villages of Oktoberfeld, Neuhof, and Chervone Pole (all located in the Molotschna region) were exiled to work camps in the Ural Mountains. This exile campaign, which was directed specifically against the kulak settlements, was part and parcel of a larger campaign which took place in the Molotschna region and which resulted in the banishment of approximately 25,000 Ukrainians, Bulgarians, and Germans to the north.[149] Hundreds of Mennonite men who were incarcerated in the Hildebrandt factory in Chortitza were also resettled in the northern regions of the Soviet Union at this time. A Mennonite from the Chortitza region reported that on June 27 and 28, 1931, approximately 400 Mennonite men along with 1,600 other men of various ethnic backgrounds were rounded up and brought to a local railway station where they were subsequently exiled to work camps in the Urals. Similar large-scale exile campaigns were also undertaken in Mennonite villages in the Crimea, where hundreds of Mennonites were shipped to Siberia and the Ural Mountains. In a letter dated May 20, 1931, a Crimean Mennonite wrote that approximately 1,000 men were arrested and banished to the north during a 4-day campaign in early May.[150] In a period of such chaos, there was no rhyme or reason as to why some villages were spared the exile process in 1931 and why other communities repeatedly saw large numbers of their inhabitants deported to the camps.

In 1932 and 1933, the exile rate in many Mennonite communities apparently decreased, a phenomenon which corresponded to an ever-decreasing number of households which still owned their own farms. The CGWD indicate that in 1932 a significant number of villages such as Adelsheim (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Friedensfeld (Sagradowka), Rosengart (Chortitza), and Schöndorf (Borozenko [Kamianka]) had the good fortune not to see any of their inhabitants exiled. Other villages such as Blumenort (Sagradowka), Grünfeld (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]), Neuendorf (Chortitza), Neu-Schönsee (Sagradowka), Nikolaital (Borozenko [Kamianka]), and Steinfeld (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]) only witnessed 1 person exiled from each of their communities.[151] In Alexanderfeld (Sagradowka), Alexanderkrone (Sagradowka), Burwalde (Chortitza), Chortitza, and Nieder-Chortitza (Chortitza) only 2 individuals were exiled from each village during 1932. The incidences of resettlement were also relatively low in other communities: in Tiege (Sagradowka) 3 villagers were banished; in both Einlage (Chortitza) and Neuenberg (Chortitza) there were 4 exiles; in Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]) 5 inhabitants were exiled; and in Kronstal (Chortitza) 6 people were transported out of Ukraine. Slightly higher exile rates were recorded in Nikolaifeld (Sagradowka), where 8 people were exiled in 1932, and in Schönhorst (Chortitza), where at least 10 inhabitants were exiled.[152] In the late fall of 1932 and spring of 1933, the Münsterberg (Molotschna) and Blumenstein (Molotschna) village soviets were also very busy when they called for the dekulakization of 17 families from each of the villages, almost all of the exiles being Mennonite. The village soviets sought to exert administrative control over this area by imposing harsh taxes on the households and proposing the exile of a significant number of families. Thus, while the incidence of exile dropped significantly in many Mennonite villages in 1932, local officials in some communities still continued and even intensified their exile campaigns. One Mennonite reported that the exile campaigns in his community had been so extensive that all of the Mennonite families, except for 3, had been resettled in the north.[153]

As in 1932, there was a general abatement in the incidence of exile campaigns in many Mennonite villages in 1933. Having weeded the countryside of the majority of kulaks and experts in 1930 and 1931, local authorities felt less political pressure in 1933 to undertake the large scale exile campaigns that had been commonplace in previous years. This did not mean, however, that Mennonites were no longer being exiled in 1933. According to the CGWD the villages of Neuenberg (Chortitza), Neuendorf (Chortitza), Schöndorf (Borozenko [Kamianka]), Steinfeld (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]), Nikolaifeld (Sagradowka), and Orloff (Sagradowka) each saw at least 1 person or household exiled in 1933.[154] Slightly higher exile rates were recorded in Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), where 6 people were exiled, and in Chortitza and Einlage (Chortitza), where 7 inhabitants were exiled from each community.[155] In a few Mennonite communities, however, extensive exile campaigns were carried out in 1933, resulting in the deportation of many Mennonite families to the north. In the early months of 1933, for instance, some Mennonites reported that a significant number of Mennonite inhabitants from the village of Steinfeld (Molotschna) had recently been exiled, and that the majority of Mennonite homes in Pragenau (Molotschna) were apparently empty because so many of the families had been transported out of Ukraine.[156] Thus, despite the general decrease in the total number of Mennonites exiled in 1933, some villages such as Steinfeld (Molotschna), Pragenau (Molotschna), Blumenort (Molotschna), and Münsterberg (Molotschna) still continued to witness the deportation of large segments of their population.

While the mass exile campaigns carried out between 1930 and 1933 affected Mennonites of every social class and vocational profession, Mennonite clergymen were arguably the group that was the hardest hit by these campaigns. In the late 1920's, it was not uncommon for a large number of Mennonite villages to have 5 or more clergymen ministering to each of the congregations within their respective communities. This changed by 1932 and 1933 when a community considered itself to be very fortunate if it still had 1 pastor remaining in the village. In Osterwick (Chortitza) 5 ministers had been exiled from Ukraine by the fall of 1932. A similar scenario unfolded in Gnadenfeld (Molotschna) where only 1 of the original 8 ministers who had once served the community still lived in the village.[157] The total number of Mennonite ministers exiled from both the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies between 1930 and 1933 is astonishing. Of the approximately 40 ministers who had once served villages in the Chortitza colony in the late 1920's, 30 had been exiled by 1932 and 1933. The loss of Mennonite ministers in the Molotschna colony appears to have been even more significant: of the 72 preachers who had once lived in the colony in the late 1920's, there were fewer than 10 ministers still serving the villages by mid-August of 1933.[158]

While there is data on the number of Mennonite clergymen who were exiled, there is no comprehensive analysis detailing the total number of Mennonites from the Crimea and Ukraine who were banished to exile camps between 1930 and 1933. Some historians and Mennonite church leaders have made estimates of the total number of Soviet Germans and Mennonites exiled in a particular year, but very few have ventured an estimate as to how many Crimean and Ukrainian Mennonites were exiled throughout the early 1930's. Adam Giesinger, for example, has made a general estimate of exiled Soviet Germans in the 1930's. Giesinger's estimate is based on Dr. Karl Stumpp's survey of 340 German communities in the vicinity of the Black Sea which reported that of an entire population of 168,309 ethnic Germans, 16,377 people were exiled in the decade of the 1930's. From these figures Giesinger reckons that about 10% of the entire German population (including Mennonites) in the Soviet Union was exiled during this 10-year period.[159] Giesinger's figures, however, are difficult to harmonize with an estimate put forward by David Toews, a Canadian Mennonite elder who was instrumental in helping thousands of Soviet Mennonites emigrate to Canada in the 1920's. According to Toews, approximately 13,000 Mennonites were sent to exile camps in 1930 alone -- a total which almost equals Giesinger's number of all German exiles for the entire 1930's. Giesinger's estimate is also difficult to reconcile with the estimate of the Soviet Mennonite J. A. Neufeld. In Neufeld's opinion there were at least 1,000 Mennonite families from Ukraine who were banished to the area surrounding the city of Chelyabinsk (near the Ural Mountains) between 1930 and 1933; Neufeld's estimate, however, does not include other Ukrainian and Crimean Mennonites who were deported to other exile settlements in the Soviet Union during this period.[160]

The unavailability of government documents and records during the Soviet era certainly explains why these historians' estimates are so wide-ranging. Today, historians have the advantage of having access to many of these previously classified documents, although as was noted above, some archivists and librarians in Ukraine still restrict access to sensitive materials that detail the number of inhabitants who were dekulakized from particular villages and ultimately exiled. The result is that historians can make educated guesses as to how many were slated for banishment, but cannot always verify the accuracy of their hunches with government records. With this in mind, and taking into account some of the regional differences in the way in which the dekulakization and exile campaigns were undertaken, it is possible from the documentation that is available -- such as Mennonite memoirs, the CGWD, letters from Mennonites published in North American Mennonite newspapers, protocols of meetings of village soviets, communist party records from the Chortitza and Molotschna regions, and records and minutes from the ECDS and other Soviet agencies -- to estimate that between 20% and 25% of the entire Mennonite population in Ukraine and the Crimea was dekulakized between 1930 and 1933. Of those that were dekulakized, between 60% and 80% were either imprisoned or exiled.[161] Of course, these estimates are impossible to verify until Ukrainian and Russian archivists allow Western historians to review the restricted records on this contentious topic.

The Red Wagons

What happened to those who were selected for exile? For thousands of Mennonites the exile process began when they were loaded into the infamous red wagons (freight and cattle rail cars) at the local train stations. During the loading process, local authorities frequently required the exiles to put their food and possessions into railway cars earmarked for storage. The officials then divided the exiles into groups with between 40 and 60 people, and herded each group, often at gunpoint, into one of the red wagons. As many as 77 exiles were crammed together into one cattle car.[162] After the human cargo was loaded, the doors of the cars were closed and locked, and the long caravan of red wagons started its journey to one of the many work camps across the USSR. It was not uncommon for some trains to transport thousands of exiles and their possessions. On April 1, 1930, for instance, over 2,000 exiles -- of which over 450 were either Mennonite or German -- were packed into cattle cars at the railway station at Lichtenau (Molotschna). The train included 48 rail cars hauling exiles and their baggage, as well as 1 military car that transported soldiers and military supplies. Long caravans of red wagons also carried banished Mennonites from the regions of Spat [Oktiabrs'ke, Crimea] and Ohrloff (Molotschna) in the spring of 1930. After a large number of Mennonites were arrested in Spat [Oktiabrs'ke, Crimea], they were brought to Symferopil' where they were loaded with other exile candidates into 56 freight and cattle cars destined for the north. Similarly, in the region of Ohrloff (Molotschna) a train of 98 railway cars -- with approximately 45 exiles in each car -- carried thousands of resettlers to the distant north. These trains with their human cargo continued to make their runs well into 1933.[163] In June of 1931, for instance, hundreds of Mennonites from the Molotschna kulak settlements of Neuhof, Oktoberfeld, and Chervone Pole were transported in red wagons to exile camps in the Chelyabinsk region. In describing this experience, one Mennonite resettler reported:

> On June 24... after the men had been held in the basements of Halbstadt and had been reunited with their wives, they and their families were loaded into cattle cars -- each car had between 45 and 50 people in it. There were 18 wagons with Germans (containing between 700 and 800 people), 26 wagons were filled with Bulgarians, Russians, and Ukrainians, and 8 wagons were for cargo.[164]

On this particular trip, the cattle cars hauled over 2,000 people. Caravans of red wagons were a common sight in Mennonite communities across the Crimea and Ukraine at this time, making their appearance in some villages with almost clock-like regularity.

The journey to the work camps was a miserable and often life-threatening experience for the resettlers. The majority of those exiled were forced to endure deplorable and inhuman living conditions in the overcrowded, unlit, and unventilated cattle cars. Soldiers guarding the exiles not only kept the doors to the rail cars locked, but also often nailed shut the windows and ventilation openings of the cars. As a result, the red wagons became stiflingly hot inside even when it was bitterly cold outside. The lack of sanitary amenities in the rail cars -- each car usually had only one small bucket in which the exiles could urinate and defecate -- only exacerbated the ventilation and sanitation problems. In some cases, the guards opened the rail car doors every few days and allowed the prisoners to relieve themselves and catch a breath of fresh air. Mennonite exiles from Steinfeld (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]) and Grünfeld (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]), for instance, reported that after a week of travelling without any fresh air they were allowed to have a few minutes to walk around the cars once a day for the remaining days of their journey. In other cases, the exiles were only allowed 1 or 2 opportunities to leave the rail cars temporarily during their 1-, 2-, or 3-week long journeys. A Mennonite from Ukraine wrote that during her trip to the work camps, the cattle cars were aired out only once.[165] To make matters worse, some exiles were given little or no drinking water to quench their thirst and help them endure the ever-present heat in the cars. A Mennonite from Fürstenwerder (Molotschna), for instance, received only half a cup of water in 2 days during his trip to the north. Another Mennonite and his family suffered even more deplorable conditions when they were not only denied drinking water but also prohibited from standing during their 5-day journey. He reported that when the train finally stopped at the exile camp, the resettlers were so numb from lying down for so many days that they were unable to stand upright for some period of time. He also complained that they were treated worse than cattle, and was convinced that the whole exile process was a "prolonged, slow game of death." To find consolation during this "slow game of death," some Mennonites sang hymns and held devotional services during the journey, convinced that their religious faith would give them the strength to endure the inhumane conditions in the red wagons.[166]

Inadequate food rations was another factor that made the trip to the work camps a painful ordeal for Mennonite exiles. Since their food supplies were often stored in separate cattle cars, the resettlers had to rely on whatever morsels of food the guards gave them. In some cases, the guards supplied the exiles with beggarly but regular portions of food. For example, a Mennonite reported that during his journey north, each cattle car of people received a piece of bread and a pail of borscht once a day. More often than not, however, the guards provided the exiles with spartan food rations on a haphazard basis. In describing his 13-day journey to work camps in the vicinity of Tomsk, a Mennonite wrote that the people in his rail car received soup on 4 occasions and bread on only a few occasions. Another Mennonite exile related that he and his fellow exiles received water 2 or 3 times a day, but only received fish soup and bread twice during their week-long trip.[167] Still other banished Mennonites were left to starve during their incarceration in the red wagons. The members of one group of Mennonite exiles, for example, were denied drinking water and were forced to share a small amount of bread with other exiles during their 6-day trip to Arkhangel'sk. Another trainload of Mennonites were reportedly denied any food during their 8-day journey to camps in the Ural Mountains. As a result, many Mennonite exiles -- especially children -- died in transit, their emaciated bodies thrown out of the cattle cars and littering the fields and forests along the railway lines to the work camps.[168]

For those who survived the journey, a new test of endurance began when the train came to a final halt and its human cargo was unloaded. Usually arriving at their destination in the dead of night, the exiles were naturally bewildered and confused as to where they were and what was going to happen to them. In some cases, Mennonite resettlers were dropped off at railway depots in cities and provinces which were in the most northern territories of the Soviet Union, thousands of kilometres away from their villages in Ukraine and the Crimea. This happened to Mennonites who were transported to camps in the vicinity of the cities of Murmansk and Arkhangel'sk along the Barents Sea and White Sea, the Solovetskiye Ostrova in the White Sea, or near the cities of Nar'yan Mar, Vorkuta, and Ust' Kulom along the Pechora and Usa Rivers.[169] Railcars of Mennonites were also transported to camps in the vast forests and marshlands surrounding the cities of Konosha, Kotlas, and Vologda, as well as to settlements near the city of Perm' and the Kama River on the western side of the Ural Mountains. An estimated 5,000 to 10,000 kulaks were interned in some of the camps in these regions, with the highest concentration near Vologda. Many Mennonites (including those who were exiled from the Molotschna kulak villages of Neuhof, Oktoberfeld, and Chervone Pole in the spring of 1931) were banished to settlements in the Ural Mountains, a large number of which were located along the eastern side of the mountain range in West Siberia. Most of these settlements were near the cities of Bogoslavskii, Bogovrovskii, Chelyabinsk, Kalchim, Lunevka, Melkoye, Polovinka, Stroitelstva, Sotrino, and Sverdlovsk.[170] Mennonite resettlers were also required to labour in regions that were even further afield, in camps near Omsk, Tara, Narym, Novosibirsk, Tiazhin, Takmyk, Tomsk, and Mariinsk in West Siberia. Over 1,000 Mennonites were reportedly living in exile in the Tomsk region in the spring of 1930.[171] Train stations in

Kazakhstan and Soviet Turkestan were also the unloading sites for Mennonites who were destined for camps not far from the cities of Qaraghandy, Aqmola, Turkestan, and Toshkent. There were even some who were transported to the regions surrounding Lake Baykal, settlements near the cities of Irkutsk and Ulan Ude in Central Siberia and Buryatia, and camps near the Amur River.[172]

The transport of Mennonite kulaks in red wagons to camps across the Soviet Union weeded out the weakest, youngest, and oldest candidates for exile. Inadequate food provisions, drinking water, and basic necessities guaranteed a certain degree of mortality on every train. From the perspective of Soviet officials, the premature death of the most vulnerable candidates for exile was desirable as it ensured that unsuitable candidates would not become a burden on exile camp officials. Only the strongest endured the red wagon experience, and those who finally stepped off the trains were in a severely weakened state.

As with other dekulakization measures discussed above, the forced relocation of large numbers of Mennonites was part of a deliberate policy to fragment and subjugate the Mennonite community. By removing traditional Mennonite political, economic, and religious leaders to Soviet gulags it was easier for pro-Soviet Mennonite leaders to assume their new positions of authority in Mennonite settlements. But just because traditional Mennonite leaders were out of sight did not mean that they were out of mind. Large segments of the Mennonite population continued to remember their exiled leaders in their prayers and forwarded food and money to them, despite the threat of dekulakization. With time, however, these demonstrations of loyalty declined in frequency as circumstances forced most Mennonites to devote more time and resources to their own survival and less to alleviating the physical hardships of those in the exile camps.

Life in the Barracks

The first taste of what life would be like for the resettlers was experienced after they disembarked from the train and unloaded their possessions. Exiles who had been sentenced to hard labour were often transported to the local prisons where they languished and in many instances died. In other cases, the resettlers were moved to newly, or yet-to-be established exile camps that were totally isolated from other villages or cities to prevent their contamination by the kulak resettlers. The officials in charge sometimes provided the resettlers with transportation in the form of horse-drawn wagons, sleds, or boats to help them bring their families and possessions to the camp sites. Usually, however, the exiles were given no assistance whatsoever, and had to walk to the camps, frequently in knee-deep snow, mud, and muskeg. Their hike to the camps could be anywhere from a few kilometres to several hundred kilometres. It was not uncommon for exiles to be forced to walk for several days or weeks at a time, carrying their children and possessions through snowbound forests or swampy marshlands. Some banished Mennonites from the Melitopil' area, for instance, were unloaded at a station on the outskirts of Moscow and then made to walk 60 versts through forests and swamps before they arrived at their camp.[173] Not surprisingly, the trek to the exile settlements resulted in the death of some of the unwilling participants. This was the fate of some Mennonite resettlers who were unloaded in the region of Tiazhin. The guards in charge ordered the resettlers to walk 129 kilometres (stretches of which were through deep mud) to Kemerovo where they were supposed to be settled. Some of these exiles were then required to walk an additional 72 kilometres to another camp. Along the way to the second camp, the guards left for dead any women or children who were unable to complete the journey on their own strength. Those exiles who endured the journey to the second camp were then forced to walk back to Kemerovo. On this return journey, the exiles retrieved those women and children who had been abandoned on the initial trip to the camp but had not yet perished. When the group arrived at Kemerovo, they were herded into freight cars and transported another 480 kilometres to exile settlements near Narym.[174] Scenes such as this were not infrequent, and as a result, some resettlers died from exhaustion, exposure, or hunger before even setting foot in the exile camps.

Mennonite resettlers who survived the arduous trek received little relief from the hunger, frigid temperatures, and exhaustion of their journey when they arrived at the camps. At many resettlement sites, guards routinely commandeered whatever food the exiles still possessed, and then denied the exiles any food for several days or in some cases weeks thereafter. This, for example, was the common practice of authorities at camps in the vicinity of Vologda, Turinskii Rudnik, and Tomsk. A Mennonite who was exiled to a settlement near Turinskii Rudnik wrote that the new exiles at the camp were not permitted to eat anything for several days. The same was true at a kulak settlement near Tomsk where guards confiscated all of the food of recently-arrived Mennonite resettlers and refused to provide them with anything to eat for their first 5 days in the settlement. Following this period of starvation, the exiles were given some millet soup and a ¼ pound of stale bread per day. These daily food rations, however, were insufficient for the already starving exiles, and they resorted to begging for food in some of the local villages. What made the first few days in the camps even more onerous for the resettlers was that many of them were quarantined in unheated holding cells for up to 2 weeks at a time. Officials reasoned that this quarantining was necessary to prevent the spread of disease in the camps; in many cases, however, this measure had the opposite effect since those who were quarantined were often given little if any food, and were thus vulnerable to illness.[175] The net effect of these inhumane practices was the death of resettlers who were unable to survive the adverse effects of prolonged and deliberate food deprivation after suffering from exhaustion and exposure during the gruelling treks through the wilderness to the camps.

Another factor which thinned out the numbers of new resettlers was the lack of adequate shelter. Seldom were new exiles allowed to move into already constructed barracks and huts immediately upon their arrival. Resettlers were frequently brought to a remote, uninhabited clearing in the woods and told that this place would be their new home and camp. If there were any huts or barracks in the vicinity of the site, they were usually reserved for camp officials. To accommodate the exiles until permanent huts and barracks were built, camp officials sometimes billeted the resettlers in the homes of local villagers or housed them in nearby prisons, churches, synagogues, or schools that had been confiscated for such purposes. This was the case for hundreds of Mennonite exiles banished to the Vologda region. The vast majority of these exiles were quartered in 42 unheated churches in the region which the government had recently confiscated. In these churches, which held as many as 800 kulak tenants, partitions were set up to form cubicles measuring 25 square feet, which was the allotted living space for 3 to 10 people.[176]

In other camps, the resettlers were ordered to build their own temporary shelters and lean-tos (often out of branches and dirt) where they lived until more permanent barracks could be constructed. Some Molotschna Mennonites who were exiled to a camp near the city of Bogoslavskii lived in crude huts until they finished building barracks for themselves and their families. Still other exiles lived, worked, and slept for days and weeks without any shelter whatsoever. Such was the experience of Mennonites who were banished to an area near Qaraghandy (Kazakhstan), and who lived and "slept under the open sky" and in temporary shelters until their 70-person barrack was completed. Exiles at another camp near Omsk were forced to sleep without any shelter in temperatures which plummeted to minus 40 degrees on the Réaumur scale.[177] Of course, the ongoing shortage of adequate barracks contributed significantly to the high incidence of illness and death among resettlers who were totally unaccustomed to the northern climate.

Another measure which brought additional stress to Mennonite resettlers was the common practice of segregating adult male exiles (usually those between 17 and 60 years of age) from their families. These men were often transported to another area where they were ordered to construct barracks, frequently in sub-zero temperatures, without proper clothing or tools and with little or no shelter. This practice of separating men from their families helped to slow down the incidence of escape while barrack construction took place. Mennonite men who arrived with their families at a camp 300 versts south of Arkhangel'sk, for example, were segregated from their families by camp officials and transported 150 versts by train to another region. The men were then ordered to walk 300 versts into the forest until they reached a clearing where they were then required to build barracks for their families. At exile settlements in the vicinity of Tomsk, men were separated from their families and transported over 100 versts to the building site of new barracks. Some of the men were paid 2 rubles per day for their work, while others were given 2½ pounds of bread per day.[178] A similar ordeal was experienced by Mennonites who were banished to the vicinity of Vologda. Immediately after the Mennonite exiles had been housed in various churches in the region, all of the men were taken from their families and shipped to Semigorodniaia (approximately 60 versts from Vologda) where they built barracks out of lumber and dirt. Without proper shoes or clothing, these men worked every day from 6 in the morning until 6 at night in snow that was 2 archines deep until the sod-covered barracks were completed. The men were not paid anything for their labour, nor were they given any food for 4 days. What made barrack construction more bearable for these men was the promise of camp officials that they would be reunited with their wives and children as soon as the barracks were completed.[179]

The permanent huts and barracks constructed by the resettlers varied significantly in size and design. The common practice in some exile settlements was for every family to build its own mud hut or shelter. A Mennonite at a camp in Siberia reported that his family built a sod-covered house (6 archines by 8 archines in size) without any nails or boards, and without glass for the windows. Another Mennonite wrote that every family at his camp was allowed to construct a shelter no larger than 3 fadens in length and 2 fadens in width. At other camps, however, families did not have the privilege of having their own living quarters; instead, they were required to share their living space with others. At one of the exile settlements near Bogoslavskii 4 families were required to live in barracks that were 35 feet in length and 24 feet in width.[180] At resettlements in the vicinity of Chesnokovka there were between 11 and 12 families in each of the barracks. There were some barracks in other camps that housed several hundred and in some cases several thousand tenants in one building. Multi-story barracks in camps near Verrolyuvotinovka, Semigorodniaia, Nizhniy Tagil, and Arkhangel'sk housed between 200 and 300 people apiece. Barracks at some exile camps near the city of Perm' were constructed to house approximately 2,000 resettlers apiece, while at a settlement in the Luza-Viatka region, 70 barracks were built for 21,000 exiles. There were also 5,000 people reportedly living in a multi-story barrack at an exile settlement near Tomsk.[181] With hundreds and sometimes thousands of exiles housed in one building, the barracks proved to be dangerous fire hazards and ideal breeding grounds for disease.

Of course, overcrowding, lack of privacy, and spartan living conditions were part of daily life in the barracks. The amount of living space allocated for each family was painfully inadequate in many of the larger barracks. The area set aside for a group of 6 people in a barrack located 300 versts south of Arkhangel'sk totalled 12 square archines. The living space for a group of 7 people at a camp near Nizhniy Tagil was a mere 4.5 metres by 1.9 metres.[182] It was not uncommon to have between 30 and 80 people share a small room that was intended to house no more than 20 people. What made these overcrowded living conditions even more difficult to endure were the very low barrack ceilings, the ongoing shortage of furniture and beds, and the lack of partitions needed to demarcate the living space of each family and to screen out the noise. A Mennonite who was resettled near Semigorodniaia, for example, complained that the ceilings were so low in his barracks that there was not enough room to stand upright. He also stated that due to a shortage of space and beds the exiles had no alternative but to sleep side by side in uncomfortable rows on the floor. A similar complaint was lodged by a Mennonite banished to a camp near Verrolyuvotinovka. He noted that the low ceilings in the barracks forced him to walk in a hunched-over position whenever he was in the building. He also reported that the adults in the building had to sleep crowded together on the wooden floor, which was directly in contact with the frozen ground. Fortunately, many of the children were allowed to sleep on the top story of the barrack, which was usually warmer and more comfortable.[183]

Noise, lice, and inadequate heating facilities were also perennial irritations of barrack life. In barracks where there were young children but few walls or partitions to deaden the noise, the cries of infants were heard day and night, making it very difficult for some to sleep.

The infestation of bedbugs and lice in the bedding and throughout the barracks only compounded the problems of barrack residents. Resettlers habitually complained that their bedding was ridden with bedbugs that initially nested in the moss used to fill and insulate the cracks in the barrack walls. The exiles also complained about the perpetual shortage of ovens for cooking meals and heating the barracks. In some of the barracks in the Vologda region, between 15 and 17 women shared an oven to prepare meals for their families. There were also barracks which did not have any ovens, making life in them absolutely miserable when the mercury dipped to minus 30 or 40 degrees Réaumur.[184]

The establishment of exile camps across the USSR involved relatively little planning on the part of the Soviet government. While Soviet authorities determined the location of the camps, it was the exiles who built the barracks and accompanying facilities (such as kitchens and infirmaries). Primitive conditions forced Mennonite exiles to depend on others if they hoped to live. Before they were exiled from Ukraine and the Crimea, Mennonites often found it impossible to trust their Mennonite, German, Jewish, Ukrainian, or Russian neighbours for fear of being betrayed to local authorities. After they were exiled, however, Mennonites quickly learned that if they wanted to survive the brutal conditions of the Soviet gulags they would have to trust other exiles, whether they were Germans, Jews, Ukrainians, or Russians.

In this respect, life in the exile camps compelled Mennonites to form and become members of new communities. While dekulakization wrought the destruction of the Mennonite community in Ukraine and the Crimea, the harsh conditions of exile camps in other areas of the USSR forged new communities where survival, rather than ethnic background, was the motivating factor for their creation. This is not to say that betrayal and distrust never arose within the camps; they did, of course, as some exiles hoped that they could improve their lives if they assisted or provided useful information to camp guards. But for most exiles, the common experience of building barracks and living together for years at a time created a sense of comradery among exiles of various ethnic backgrounds. This sense of community was essential to endure the punishment set aside for the worst enemies of the Soviet state.

The Work Regimen

Probably the biggest single factor that sapped the exiles' will to survive their sentences in the camps related to their unreasonable work regimens. Because settlements were usually located in remote and densely forested regions of the Soviet taiga. Mennonite resettlers banished to these settlements worked as woodcutters. In these logging camps, only the younger children and the elderly were exempted from working in the forests. At one of the lumber camps near Monastyrka, for example, all of the men between the ages of 16 and 60 and all of the women between the ages of 16 and 55 worked in the forests; the only exiles who were not required to fell trees were those with documentation from a doctor excusing them from such tasks. Those resettlers who were medically unfit to cut trees worked together with the infirm and elderly resettlers to prepare meals, look after the smaller children, collect firewood, or work as housekeepers for camp officials.[185] The minimum age for work exemption from logging was even lower at the camps near Bogoslavskii and Gaima. In Bogoslavskii, only children under the age of 14 and adults over the age of 56 were spared from woodcutting duties. At the camp near Gaima, children as young as 8 years old and adults up to the age of 60 were ordered to cut and trim trees. Although a few of the more fortunate children of resettlers were permitted to attend school in neighbouring villages, most were required to work in the camps instead. Even women who had given birth were required to return to their jobs of cutting and stacking lumber soon after delivery.[186]

The tasks of cutting trees and stacking logs undoubtedly proved to be exhausting and arduous work for the resettlers. Leaving in the early hours of the morning, the exiles were often ordered to walk long distances to their work sites, and then required to cut and stack trees for long hours, frequently in bonechilling weather. Resettlers at a exile settlement near Semigorodniaia worked from 6 in the morning until 6 in the evening (with only a 1-hour lunch break) for 2- or 3-week periods without a single day of rest. Exiles in other camps were required to work from 5 in the morning until 8 at night without a break; they also had to work through the night if they were unable to complete their work quotas. Mennonites banished to a camp in the Vologda region were forced to put in long work shifts for 116 consecutive days. These long work shifts excluded any time that the exiles needed to walk to and from the work area. At Lunevka, for instance, the distance between the barracks and the work site was 4 versts; at another camp near the Ural Mountains, the exiles walked 8 kilometres in the morning and another 8 kilometres in the evening to get to and from work.[187] Considering the extended work shifts and the long distances to the work sites, it is not surprising that the exiles were completely exhausted by the end of the day, and had little time to do anything else but eat and sleep.

Another factor which contributed to the overall fatigue of exiles was the unreasonableness of the work quotas that exiles were required to meet in order to receive any food rations. Notwithstanding that individual work quotas varied significantly from camp to camp, most quotas were outrageously high and almost impossible to fulfill. Banished Mennonites at camps near Bogoslavskii and Monastyrka complained that very few exiles were able to meet the daily quota for each worker, which was to cut, split, and stack 1 cubic metre of wood. The daily quota for every resettler at a camp near Lunevka was to chop down trees, cut the trees into the appropriate lengths, and then stack 3.5 cubic metres of wood -- a herculean task given that many of the trees ranged between 7 and 8.5 metres in length and were about 24 centimetres thick in diameter. The individual work quotas appeared to be even more exacting at other settlements. One Mennonite lamented that every exile at his camp had to chop down 35 mature trees and trim off their branches in order to meet the daily individual work requirements. A similar complaint was lodged by another Mennonite who wrote that every individual at his work site was required to cut down 50 trees per day.[188] Few individuals could meet such unrealistic quotas; in many instances the resettlers had difficulties in filling even half of their daily work quotas.

While some camps required resettlers to meet individual work quotas, other camps employed a daily brigade quota arrangement. Under this system, groups of resettlers worked together in brigades (usually ranging from 2 to 10 people each) and were collectively required to meet a daily quota in order to receive their food rations. In theory, the brigade quota arrangement was supposed to foster a socialist attitude among the workers and allow the weaker and less productive members of the crew to benefit from the labour of the stronger and more productive members; in reality, however, the brigade quotas were so outrageously high that few, if any exiles benefited from this arrangement. Such was the experience of a Mennonite who was banished to a lumber camp near Podun. He reported that he and 3 women in his work brigade were often unable to meet their daily quota, which was to cut and stack 7 metres of wood.[189] A similar complaint was made by a Mennonite woman who was banished to a camp in the Ural Mountains. She wrote that because of the high density of trees in the forest, her 8-person crew usually found it impossible to meet their daily quota, which was to chop down 40 cubic metres of trees or split 20 cubic metres of wood. At another settlement near Tomsk, each 10-man crew was required to cut down 100 trees per day -- the average trunk of a tree was between 0.5 and 1 metre in diameter. Few crews ever attained this quota as many brigades were only able to cut 35 trees per day.[190]

The inhospitable climatic and geographical conditions of the Soviet taiga only made it more difficult for the exiles to attain the outlandish daily work quotas. In the winter months when the temperature could plummet to minus 30, 40, or 50 degrees Réaumur, resettlers toiled in deep snow without adequate winter clothing or boots. Mennonites at logging camps in the vicinity of Podun and Monastyrka complained that they frequently worked in snow that was up to their knees. A similar complaint came from Mennonites at a camp near Lunevka. They reported that they were forced to work in sub-zero temperatures without proper shoes and with only sacks wrapped around their feet to keep them warm.[191] Harsh working conditions were also experienced by Mennonites who lived in the Udsva-Vom region and who worked in temperatures that dropped to as low as minus 57 degrees Réaumur. Because of their exposure to such hostile winter conditions, resettlers repeatedly suffered from frostbitten noses, hands, and feet; in those cases where there was prolonged subjection to such bitterly cold conditions, death was the natural result.[192]

The advent of spring and summer did little to improve the working conditions for the resettlers. The thawing of winter frost converted much of the ground of the Soviet taiga into muddy bogs and swamps, and as a result, many exiles were forced to cut trees and stack lumber in knee-deep mud. One of the hazards of working in such conditions was the very real danger of a resettler being so bemired in the taiga that he or she was unable to move out of the way of a falling tree cut by a co-worker. According to a Mennonite deported to the Monastyrka area, this type of accident resulted in a number of serious and fatal injuries at his work site.[193] The adverse climatic and geographical peculiarities of the Soviet taiga certainly proved to be important factors in the high incidence of work-related injuries and deaths suffered by Mennonite exiles.

The callous and apathetic attitude of camp officials and guards toward the resettlers also contributed to numerous work-related injuries and deaths. Viewing the exiles as expendable Soviet slave labour, officials and guards routinely forced seriously ill and injured exiles to work long hours in the most trying circumstances. Old women who had swollen feet from hunger, young girls who had bloody and bruised shoulders from carrying wood, and men who had injured hands and feet from chopping trees were ordered to work, notwithstanding that they were in no condition to do so. At one settlement, for instance, a Mennonite reported that camp officials forced a woodcutter, who had just been released from a hospital but who was still very ill, to work from 4 in the afternoon until 11 in the evening on the same day of his hospital release. Similar treatment was experienced by an exile in another camp who was suffering from a scalded and infected foot. Although he was unable to work and needed time to recuperate, camp authorities were unsympathetic to his plight and reprimanded him for malingering. They also maliciously cut the infected sore off his foot, forced him to walk barefoot in the snow, and ordered him to return to work.[194]

Some guards and officials were so apathetic toward the resettlers that they left for dead those exiles who collapsed from exhaustion and were unable to work or walk back to the barracks. A Mennonite at a camp near the White Sea reported that if a person fell to the ground while working and was unable to get up, the guards refused to allow anyone to come to that person's rescue, thus ensuring death from over-exposure to frigid temperatures or starvation.[195] The pervasive and malevolent attitude of camp guards and officials translated into life-threatening injuries and loss of life for many Mennonite woodcutters.

Given their callous attitude toward injured resettlers, it is thus not surprising that camp officials often punished exiles for the most innocuous offenses. Such was the experience of a Mennonite man at a camp near Istupil who was placed in a cold holding cell without any food for 2 days because he had been ill and was unable to work on a particular day. Guards and officials were also quick to reprimand resettlers who failed to meet their daily work quotas. It was common practice for camp officials to deny resettlers their wages or food rations if they failed to meet their quotas.[196] Officials also ordered exiles to continue working late into the evening or even through the night until the quotas were filled. For example, when exiles at a camp near Podun did not complete their quotas, they were required to work through the entire night under the surveillance of armed guards. Some guards and officials also took delight in meting out punishments which forced resettlers to perform awkward and often ridiculous tasks. At one settlement, for instance, any exile who failed to meet a work quota or camp regulation was required to stand motionless on a tree stump for several hours; if the exile failed this task then he or she had to carry a heavy load of bricks for an extended period of time. For those resettlers accused of committing major offenses, harsh penalties were summarily imposed. Without any trial to speak of, offending resettlers were incarcerated in local prisons where they were usually tortured and sentenced to long terms of forced labour. Some camp officials, such as those in charge of settlements in the Amur region and in Siberia, went so far as to order the immediate execution of exiles on trumped-up allegations.[197]

Resettlers assigned to the task of cutting trees and stacking lumber certainly found their work taxing and dangerous, but the non-woodcutting tasks and duties performed by other Mennonite exiles were no less onerous or toilsome. This was particularly true for those who constructed and maintained roads and ice paths to transport lumber from the forest work sites or who worked in coal, copper, or gold mines. Like the woodcutters, the resettlers assigned to road-building and mining projects toiled for long hours in inhospitable climatic conditions. In detailing his arduous task as a road builder, a Mennonite at a camp near Lunevka reported:

> Here... [at Lunevka] we only work and work. We have to work 16 hours a day in 40 degrees cold. We have to make ice roads to carry the trees out of the forest. The road is 1.2 metres wide, and on each side of the road is a furrow which is 5 inches wide and 5 inches deep.... These furrows are filled with water. This water freezes overnight and it is shovelled smooth and swept off for the runners on the sleds [used to haul the lumber].... Peter is still at Istupie. It is very bad for him in that he receives only 300 grams of bread per day, and if he misses one day of work because of sickness... then he is thrown into a cold room for 2 days without any bread. There he is almost tormented to death.... All day long it is our prayer to God that He would prove himself true and will lead us. Till now, God has not yet heard us, but we firmly believe that we will be heard. His Word is true and remains true, but only we again lack the patience. Pray for us. [198]

While this type of work was certainly wearisome and potentially life threatening, it was not as dangerous as the day-to-day tasks performed by Mennonite exiles working in Soviet mines. At camps near Bogoslavskii, Chelyabinsk, and throughout Siberia and the Amur region, Mennonite resettlers mined coal, copper, and gold, often without proper tools or equipment and in very unsafe conditions. They were usually required to fulfill outlandish work quotas, and were seldom given any days off from work.[199] Like their counterparts working in the forests as woodcutters and road builders, Mennonite miners were treated by the Soviet authorities as expendable slave labourers.

Mennonites in exile were not restricted to working only as miners, woodcutters, or road builders. Mennonites at camps near Narym, for instance, were employed as carpenters, while those living near Chelyabinsk were involved in both construction work and brick making. Quarry work and railway construction were some of the tasks performed by Mennonites banished to the region of Polovinka, while many Mennonites in the Murmansk area worked as labourers in the construction of shipping canals.[200] There were also Mennonites who toiled in farm fields or worked as blacksmiths in the vicinity of Poselok, who herded cattle at camps near the Kalchim, and who dug graves at a camp near Nizhniy Tagil. Other tasks performed by Mennonite exiles included fighting forest fires, working in pulp and paper mills, digging wells, locksmithing, cooking and baking, night patrolling, bookkeeping, and working as assistants in hospitals. Mennonite resettlers were even employed as school teachers.[201]

Some jobs were almost exclusively performed by women resettlers. In the Melkoye and Nizhniy Tagil regions, for example, Mennonite women worked in the hospitals as nurses and assistants. At camps near Arkhangel'sk, Tomsk, and along the Ural Mountains, Mennonite women washed floors in the camp offices and barracks, worked as cooks for railway construction crews, and were employed in businesses and factories in nearby towns and cities.[202] Aside from their daily chores, some Mennonite women performed sexual favours for camp guards and officials who often threatened to harm them or their families if they did not comply. A Mennonite living near the White Sea reported that women at his camp were forced to work during the day and then engage in sexual acts with the guards at night.[203] In every way, Mennonite women in exile were subjugated, exploited, and denigrated.

The treatment of exiles by camp officials and guards was often nothing less than criminal. Frequently officials and guards administered their camps as satrapies without any concern about answering to higher authorities for their treatment of prisoners. Meeting production quotas and preventing exiles from escaping were the primary objectives for camp authorities. They hoped to accomplish these objectives by imposing work regimens which no one could meet. Those exiles who failed to meet their work quotas, whether they were male or female, young or old, were punished and occasionally executed. While not every camp operated at the same level of brutality, the shocking rates of work-related fatalities in many of the camps is indicative of the lack of empathy that most camp authorities had for their labourers.

The harsh realities of camp life forced many exiles to help each other cope with their work and living conditions. These circumstances forced exiles to work together to meet quotas in order to receive enough food or money to survive. This created new relationships between Mennonite and non-Mennonite exiles: they cooked together, ate together, looked after each other's children, and in some cases started new families together. Although these new communities and relationships shared some of the features of traditional Mennonite communities (that is, there were hierarchal structures which usually included men in leadership position), the pronounced class and economic hierarchies that had previously existed in Ukraine and the Crimea were noticeably absent. What inhibited these hierarchies from developing in many exile camp communities were the work regimens, which were imposed on almost every exile (whether they were former Mennonite estate owners or

Ukrainian peasants), and which often made irrelevant previous class and socio-economic distinctions.

Wages, Food Rations, and Aid from the West

The exploitation which both Mennonite women and men experienced during their years in exile also manifested itself in the ridiculously low wages and spartan food rations that were paid to them. In camps where exiles were paid for their work, the wages often worked out to less than 2 rubles, and sometimes less than 1 ruble per day. Mennonite woodcutters in the vicinity of Tomsk, for instance, received only 2 rubles per day. At a camp in the Ural Mountains, a girl who worked in a nearby city received 50 rubles per month. Lower wages were paid to an exiled Mennonite woman in the Nizhniy Tagil region who worked as a nurse and was paid only 34 rubles per month. Other Mennonite resettlers were forced to make ends meet with even less income. The average wage for an exile at a camp near Severnoye was 25 rubles per month, and Mennonite girls who helped with the harvest at a camp near Poselok received 8 kopecks per day and some rye and barley flour.[204] Often these wages could only buy enough food to feed 1 person, not an entire family. What complicated matters was when local camp officials routinely refused to pay the exiles all of the wages they had rightfully earned. In the late fall of 1930, for instance, a Mennonite at a lumber camp near Monastyrka wrote that an average woodcutter received 52 kopecks for every cubic metre of cut and loaded wood. He added, however, that camp officials frequently paid the workers only 25 percent of their pay, particularly in the months between April and November of 1930. This kind of arbitrary exploitation was also experienced by a Mennonite resettler at another camp who received only 17 rubles after working for 8 months. Some officials made it a practice to deduct large sums from the exiles' wages, thus insuring that few of the exiles would have enough money to buy food for themselves and their families. This was the experience of a Mennonite who toiled in the copper and coal mines near the city of Bogoslavskii. He wrote that any worker who fulfilled the daily work quota received 1.68 rubles -- a wage that would purchase 2.5 kilograms of rye flour, 200 grams of porridge, 200 grams of herring, 1 tablespoon of sugar, and 1 teaspoon of oil. He also noted, however, that authorities deducted 10 percent of the daily wage for the resettler's use of the camp's barracks and another 25% for the coffers of the GPU.[205] As a result of inadequate wages, hunger and disease came to be the constant companions of Mennonites living in exile.

Trying to cope and survive on such ever-diminishing slave wages was made even more difficult by the inflationary increase in the price of food commodities between 1930 and 1933. Because many exile families had to survive on less than 2 rubles a day, exorbitant food prices made it impossible for these families to purchase even the most basic of food staples. In 1930, for instance, resettlers living in the vicinity of Vologda were expected to pay 50 kopecks for a kilogram of black bread, 1.5 to 2.0 rubles for a kilogram of white bread, 30 kopecks for an egg, 50 kopecks for a litre of milk, and 6 rubles for a kilogram of sugar. At local markets near exile camps in the vicinity of Tiazhin, flour sold for 20 rubles per pood and potatoes cost 4 rubles per pood. In 1931, exiles living near Melkoye were asked to pay a ruble for 550 grams of bread, and resettlers near Bogoslavskii were required to pay 40 rubles if they wished to purchase a pood of horse meat.[206] Inflationary food prices were also commonplace in camps near Qaraghandy, Kazakhstan (where a pound of meat cost 1.2 rubles, 5 cups of milk sold for 4 rubles, and a pail of potatoes sold for 5 rubles) and Aqmola, Kazakhstan (where a pood of bruised grain cost 60 rubles and a kilogram of butter sold for 15 rubles). Food prices only continued to escalate in 1932 and 1933. Resettlers living in the vicinity of Melkoye were asked to pay a ruble for an egg and 10 rubles for a pound of butter. High food prices were also the norm at camps near Polovinka, where a kilogram of meat sold for 10 rubles and a pood of potatoes fetched between 20 and 24 rubles, and at camps in Siberia and along the Ural Mountains, where a pood of flour could be purchased for between 90 and 120 rubles and a cow for over 1,000 rubles.[207] Prices such as these made it virtually impossible for the majority of exiles to purchase adequate food for their families.

At some settlements resettlers were not paid in wages for their work, but rather in spartan and often stale food rations. The kind and quantity of rations that officials apportioned to resettlers varied from camp to camp, but on the whole, they rarely met the nutritional needs of the exiles. At a camp near Kornilovka, for instance, an exile who fulfilled his daily work quota received only a kilogram of black bread, 120 grams of porridge, a spoonful of sugar, and a piece of fish. The daily food ration for a resettler at another camp near Nizhniy Tagil was 800 grams of bread; every second week each worker was also supplied with 10 kilograms of potatoes (many of which were frozen), 750 grams of sugar, 100 grams of oil, 2.5 kilograms of meal, and some oatmeal porridge.[208] Some Mennonites working in the vicinity of Arkhangel'sk subsisted on a daily diet of 400 grams of bread which was supplemented monthly with 500 grams of sugar, 2 kilograms of meat, 3 kilograms of fish, 600 grams of porridge, and 2 ounces of tea. The daily menu at other camps was even more parsimonious. In the region of Poselok, for example, every worker received 600 grams of bread per day, as well as some soup and horse meat. The daily rations for a resettler working in a forest near Tomsk were a mere 400 grams of bread and some porridge. Even smaller rations of 300 grams per day were apportioned to a resettler who worked at camps near Gaima or Istupil, while a resettler working near the White Sea received a mere ½ pound of bread per day.[209] As one former Mennonite exile candidly observed, the "food rations were such that we received too little to live on, but too much to stop us from dying."[210]

Although the rations of the working exiles were often paltry and inadequate, they were significantly larger than the meagre portions allotted to small children, the handicapped and elderly, and men and women who were ill or incapable of working. At a camp near Melkoye, for example, each worker received 700 grams of bread per day, as well as 2 ladles of porridge in the morning and 2 ladles in the evening; their non-working cabin mates, on the other hand, received only 5 kilograms of flour, 5 kilograms of porridge, and 100 grams of sugar for the entire month. The daily rations were even more niggardly for non-working Mennonites at other camps. In the vicinity of Chesnokovka, for instance, non-working resettlers were given between 300 and 400 grams of bread a day, while the workers were allotted 800 grams of bread a day. The rations for every worker at another camp near Lunevka consisted of a kilogram of bread per day; those family members who were incapable of working received only 8 kilograms of flour per month.[211] Likewise, workers at a camp near Tomsk received 2½ pounds of bread per day while the daily menu of non-workers consisted of only 4 ounces of stale bread and some millet soup. Similarly scanty rations were also apportioned to resettlers banished to the area surrounding Chelyabinsk, where workers received 2 pounds of bread a day, while non-workers were given a mere 250 grams per day. There were even different food rations apportioned to working and non-working children at some camps. In a settlement near Monastyrka, every child who worked received 18 kilograms of food per month; non-working children, however, obtained only 10.8 kilograms of food per month. Some officials refused to give non-working exiles any food rations whatsoever. Authorities at a camp near Murmansk closely adhered to the biblical principle that "whoever will not work shall not eat"; as a result, non-working resettlers had no alternative but to rely entirely on the generosity of their working relatives and friends for their daily food requirements. In the spring and summer exiles also picked wild berries and mushrooms, and in some cases weeds and wild grass in order to supplement their beggarly food rations.[212]

If there was one thing that helped some Mennonite exiles to avoid imminent starvation, it was the packages of food and the letters containing money sent by friends and relatives living in Ukraine, the Crimea, and the West. Mennonites who were banished to settlements near Usakovskii, Bashenevskii, Chelyabinsk, and Monastyrka reported time and again of how the food packages and money-containing letters "saved their lives." But acquiring these packages and letters did not come without a price: camp officials regularly imposed hefty duties on all packages and letters addressed to resettlers under their charge. In a letter from a group of Mennonite exiles, for example, the authors of the letter thanked a North American couple for sending them 2 packages of food and supplies; the authors also stated, however, that they did not want any more packages because of the high duty fees imposed on such parcels. They advised that they had sufficient funds to pay the duty of 18.35 rubles on the first package, but had to borrow 12.8 rubles from other exiles to pay the duty on the second package.[213] A Mennonite at another exile settlement was required to pay an exorbitant duty of 30 rubles before officials finally surrendered his package to him. Similarly, resettlers at a camp in the Ural Mountains were required to pay officials several kopecks before they could receive letters from friends and relatives. As time progressed, many exiles were simply unable to scrounge together enough money to pay such extortionist duties; those who did pay the duties often discovered to their chagrin that much of the food in the packages and money in the letters had already been pilfered by camp officials.[214]

Apart from plundering the contents of foreign packages and letters, camp authorities also routinely censored, and in some cases destroyed letters and packages. Although Mennonites continued to receive most of their correspondence and packages in 1930, this was no longer the case in 1931 when camp authorities began to curb the flow of mail to those under their charge. Mennonites banished to camps near Tomsk, Murmansk, Gaima, and Poselok often complained that most of their mail was either intercepted and withheld from them, or else returned to the sender. The letters most likely to be destroyed were those written in German or with postmarks from North America or Europe. A Mennonite woman who was resettled near the Ural Mountains advised her brother in Ukraine to write all of his letters to her in the Russian language, noting that her camp commander destroyed all letters that were written in German. This was the same advice that Mennonite exiles at camps in the vicinity of Klinok and Arkhangel'sk also gave to their friends and relatives. Another Mennonite resettler informed his Canadian acquaintances and relatives that correspondence from Canada and other Western countries was usually intercepted and destroyed by camp officials. Even the letters that were sent by exiles to friends and relatives in Ukraine, the Crimea, and the West were often routinely opened or destroyed. In Ukraine, for instance, Mennonites from the Sagradowka and Ignatievo [Dzerzhyns'ke] colonies noted that letters from exiled relatives and friends were already being censored in the latter months of 1930.[215]

Mennonite exiles who were fortunate enough to receive money via letters and packages found that they were not always able to use the funds to buy food, clothing, or other items that they desperately needed. At camps where the exiles were given food rations instead of wages for their work, they were usually not permitted to purchase food or other commodities from nearby stores or local inhabitants; likewise, local inhabitants and store owners were also strictly prohibited from selling anything to exiles living in the region. Mennonites at camps in the vicinity of Monastyrka, Vologda, Tomsk, and the Ural Mountains lamented that they were in dire need of extra food, but were not permitted to purchase anything from neighbouring villages or inhabitants. One Mennonite even noted that money was of no use whatsoever at his camp.[216] Not surprisingly, there was often a high incidence of malnutrition in those settlements where the exile population was prohibited from buying food from nearby villages.

Even in camps where Mennonites were permitted to purchase commodities, hunger and starvation were part of day-to-day life and prompted many resettlers to beg for food in neighbouring villages when the opportunity arose. Because Mennonites in the settlements near Tomsk, Omsk, Podun, and Lunevka were frequently denied their daily rations for days and sometimes weeks at a time, they had no alternative but to rely upon the sympathy and charity of local inhabitants for any extra morsels of food. In some camps, such as those near Bogoslavskii, resettlers and their children walked up to 23 versts to a nearby city or village to panhandle for bread on their days off.[217] All too often, however, villagers did not have enough food for their own families, let alone for hundreds and sometimes thousands of starving exiles at nearby camps. Nevertheless, for some resettlers the generosity of nearby villagers proved to be the only reason why they survived. As one Mennonite at a camp near Tomsk wrote, "as long as the people continue to give to the beggars, they [the exiles]... will live."[218]

That the Soviet government condoned and encouraged camp authorities to starve exiles as a form of punishment is suggested by the meagre food rations and wages that most Mennonite exiles received for their labour. By their actions some camp authorities interpreted Stalin's call to liquidate the kulak class as a directive to exploit kulak labour (just as peasant labour had been exploited by the kulak) and to take measures that would allow for the premature death of exiles in their custody. What is important to note is that not all camp authorities acted in the same manner or with the same level of brutality; there were officials who provided adequate rations and wages to their Mennonite exiles and even allowed exiles to work in various capacities in nearby communities. Acknowledging that not all camp authorities brutally mistreated those under their charge does not mitigate the suffering of those who languished in Soviet gulags; rather, it is a recognition that not every camp operated in the same manner and that camp authorities had some discretion in how they treated those under their charge.

Reasons to Live: Religious Faith, Early Release, and Escape

What helped the majority of Mennonite exiles to persevere in such tribulation was their religious faith. For thousands of them, their trust in God, obedience to the teachings of Christ, adherence to the spiritual and practical advice of exiled elders and preachers, and recollection of the lives of former Anabaptist and Mennonite martyrs provided them with spiritual, emotional, and intellectual consolation which helped them to endure the most trying times. Not all Mennonite exiles were permitted to practice their faith, however, and the extent to which Mennonite exiles were allowed to express their religious convictions varied from camp to camp. In those camps where the rules prohibiting proselytizing and participation in religious practices were not strictly enforced, Mennonites practised their faith with little difficulty. Some camp authorities even went so far as to allow resettlers to hold religious services in the nearby forests or in the barracks on Sundays, religious holidays, and their days of rest.[219] At other camps, however, officials enforced every letter of the law prohibiting religious observance, making it very difficult for resettlers to carry out even the most private of religious practices, such as scripture reading. Moreover, the policy of most camps to have the exiles work on Sundays and religious holidays -- with the threat of punishment for those who refused – made it almost impossible for Mennonites to share their religious experiences in a common fellowship. At settlements in the Arkhangel'sk region and the Ural Mountains, Mennonites lamented that they almost always worked on holidays and very rarely enjoyed a day of rest on a Sunday. Another Mennonite reported that those exiles who refused to work on Sunday were not given any food rations for a 6-day period. Yet despite all of the strictly enforced rules forbidding religious practice, camp officials were unable to suppress, let alone stamp out the religious devotion shared by Mennonite exiles. At the risk of their own lives, Mennonite resettlers in even the most oppressive camps held secret nocturnal religious services in nearby forests in order to join in fellowship together and share in each other's tribulations and hopes.[220]

Life in exile compelled Mennonites to reevaluate their priorities in matters of faith. Their exile experience forced them to take stock of their religious heritage, abandon those traditions and practices that were no longer relevant, and hold tight to those that were essential. Without their ministers, Mennonite exiles looked to themselves and believers from other Christian traditions for religious direction. They also sought spiritual consolation in non-Mennonite fellowships and in some cases abandoned the Mennonite faith altogether. These developments, along with the ongoing government-sponsored attacks against religious practice, served to accelerate the demise of Soviet Mennonite congregations. They also foreshadowed what would occur in Mennonite communities in the late 1940s and early 1950s: the large scale departure of Mennonites from their religious tradition and their association with the more influential Baptist denominations.

Religious faith undoubtedly gave many exiled Mennonites a reason to hope when others could no longer find a reason to live. Another factor that gave a few Mennonite exiles a reason to hope for a better future was the rare opportunity to join a local collective farm. A number of Mennonites at camps near Akmolinsk, Kaktal, Chelyabinsk, and Arkhangel'sk were allowed to live and work on nearby collectives. Of course, these exiles had no voting rights with respect to the decision-making process of the collectives, notwithstanding that they were required to pay taxes to collective farm officials. The advantage of being able to work on a collective was that the living conditions were invariably better than those found in exile settlements. Such was the experience of a Mennonite man who, after spending some time in a camp near Arkhangel'sk, was later moved to another camp on the Pinega River where he was allowed to live and work on a nearby collective. In a letter to his children he reported that he was paid for his labour on the collective, and was given plenty of freedom to travel and visit friends and relatives in the area on the condition that he never attempt to visit his children still living at his home in Ukraine. To insure that he did not try to escape to Ukraine, collective farm authorities imposed the probationary requirement that he report to them at least twice a month. He also wrote that none of his mail or packages were lost or ransacked, that he occasionally received clothes from relatives in Germany, and that his life on the collective was relatively good in comparison to the conditions experienced by fellow exiles in the camps.[221]

While a few Mennonites were fortunate enough to serve their sentences on collectives rather than in exile camps, others were even more fortunate in that they were released and allowed to return home. For some, this dream came true much sooner than they anticipated. At a few camps, officials occasionally released exiles *en masse* and on the spur of the moment, informing them that they were free to go wherever they chose. Such was the experience of a Mennonite preacher sent to an exile camp along the northern coast of the Soviet Union. He reported that all of the resettlers in his camp were evicted from their quarters after the crew of the Soviet ship the "Vodniki" commandeered the barracks for the entire winter while the ship was in a nearby port. Just before the sailors moved into the barracks, local officials freed the exiles and allowed them to go wherever they pleased. Many of the exiles left for home. The preacher and two of his friends, however, could not afford to purchase rail tickets, and so they roamed around the region for over a month until they were able to find a small room where they stayed for some time. A similar story of release from exile occurred at a camp near Tiazhin. In the late spring of 1930, all of the exiles at the camp -- many of whom were recent arrivals -- were loaded onto freight cars and taken to the Narym region. Here officials opened the doors of the rail cars and advised the exiles that they were free to go because of a shortage of food; the only condition of their release was that they leave the Tomsk region within 2 days. Those exiles with money immediately boarded trains leaving for the south. Some of these released resettlers, however, were immediately arrested and transported to other exile camps after train officials discovered that they did not have the proper travelling papers. Other released exiles who were unable to travel home by train met an even more disastrous end. Because of food shortages in the area, starvation and disease affected a number of these exiles, resulting in over 80 deaths in a 10-day period.[222]

More systematic guidelines to determine which exiles were to be given an early release were used at other camps. In many cases it was the elderly and the children who were released before anyone else. In September of 1931, for example, resettlers at a camp near Narym were told that adults over the age of 60 and children under the age of 14 were free to return home. At another exile settlement it was men over 60, women over 50, and children under 16 who were released before their sentences expired. In other camps, only the younger children -- those under the age of 12 -- were permitted to return to the Crimea and Ukraine. But while some younger children and the elderly seized the opportunity to return to their home villages, many did not. This was because leaving the camp often meant leaving behind the few family members and friends they still had. What also dissuaded eligible releasees from leaving was the fact that their possessions and homes had already been confiscated and thus there was very little reason for them to return to the south, especially without their families. Moreover, the majority of these children and elderly were not in a position to support themselves by working.[223] Given these circumstances most Mennonites turned down the opportunity to leave the exile settlements, believing that life in the camps with those they loved was better than life anywhere else without any family, friends, or home.

For those exiles who could not wait until camp authorities officially released them, escape from the camps often appeared to be the only possible way of avoiding any further inhuman treatment. Those who did flee from the camps did so knowing that they would be severely punished if captured. At many camps, escapees who failed in their bid for freedom were incarcerated for days in a cold cell without any food, and subsequently sentenced to punishment work around the camp for long periods of time. At a camp near Istupil, for example, a youth who had been captured after his third attempt to escape was kept in an unheated cell for 5 days without any food; at another camp, captured escapees were not fed for 3 days, and were then required to perform punishment work. Captured runaways in other camps were either transported to special camps for escapees or to prisons where they were sentenced to a long period of hard labour. A Mennonite resettler at a camp near the Kalchim reported that some of the escapees were sent to a special camp where they were required to perform 6 weeks of hard labour. Other Mennonite exiles were condemned to 3 years of hard labour after their escape attempts had failed.[224]

Notwithstanding the inherent dangers associated with attempting to escape, a surprising number of desperate and despondent exiles believed that the risk of being caught and punished was worth taking. In planning their escape, exiles used a wide variety of strategies, some of which were more successful than others. One strategy used by many exiles was to make a mad dash for the woods when they were at work and the guards were not looking or when nightfall came and there was less chance of being seen. Others used more ingenious strategies to make their getaway. At a camp in Siberia, for instance, officials asked for volunteers to travel 100 versts to a distant village to obtain goods and food supplies for the camp. The exiles who volunteered to make the trip were given travel permits before they left for the village. Along the way to the village the exiles broke free from their guards, and with their travelling passes in hand and the help of local inhabitants they were able to board a boat that took them to Omsk. Eventually the exiles were able to make their way back to their homes. Escapades such as this were not uncommon, as a relatively significant percentage of the exile population -- in some camps more than 10% -- tried to flee from the settlements. Such was the case at 2 camps near Usakovskii and Bashenevskii, where 38 out of a total 308 exiles fled from the camps.[225]

Those who succeeded in escaping seldom found life on the run easier than life in the camps. Without maps, compasses, proper clothing, or sufficient food, Mennonite fugitives wandered around in knee-deep snow and sub-zero temperatures, trying to find their way through unfamiliar terrain without being seen or captured. Yet despite what often seemed to be insurmountable barriers and difficulties, some Mennonite escapees returned to their homes in Ukraine and the Crimea. A Mennonite living in the vicinity of Tomsk fled from his camp and was able to make his way to his home near Rudnerweide (Molotschna). Another Mennonite in the Tomsk region was even more ambitious in his escape. After fleeing from his camp and travelling by wagon, train, and ship to his home in Neukirch (Molotschna), he left for the Amur region where he planned to cross into China and make his way to North America.[226]

For Mennonite fugitives who returned to their homes in the south, their good fortune could suddenly change when they were recognized and recaptured by local government informants. In the majority of cases, the recaptured fugitives were imprisoned or sent to other exile camps. This happened to young Mennonite men who escaped from an exile settlement near Bogoslavskii. On their journey home, the 2 youths developed foot sores, lost or tore their clothes, and went for days at a time without any food or money. When they finally arrived home, however, they were seen by a neighbour's son and immediately incarcerated. To avoid the same fate as these young men, other Mennonite fugitives decided that it was in their best interest to live in another region, such as Samara, Soviet Turkestan, or China, rather than run the risk of being identified and recaptured when they returned to their home villages. They also avoided corresponding with those family members still living at home, since their mail was often censored by government agents. By taking these precautions and meeting with family members only when it was absolutely necessary, an escapee on the run could often avoid the misfortune of being recaptured and sent back to the camps.[227]

Few Mennonites who escaped or were released from the camps remained in the region to which they had been exiled. Unlike Russian or Ukrainian exiles who blended into the surrounding countryside more easily and who often lived in close proximity to their camps after their release, most Mennonite exiles returned to the home colonies or to other regions populated by Mennonites. At least this was the case before the mass resettlement of Mennonites from Ukraine and the Crimea after World War II. In the 1950s and 1960s, with no home communities to return to, significant numbers of Mennonites elected to live and work in communities near the camps in which they had previously lived as exiles.

Reasons to Die: Hunger, Disease, and Hopelessness

Escape enabled some Mennonite resettlers to free themselves from the drudgery, oppression, and inhumanity of exile life. This, however, was not the only means by which some Mennonite resettlers believed they could liberate themselves from their servile existence. Some exiles who did not have the courage to run away and were unable to cope with life in the camps simply took their own lives. At a camp near Turinskii Rudnik, for instance, a Mennonite reported that a large percentage of the resettlers in the camp were very depressed and wanted to die. Depression also affected some Mennonite exiles at a camp near Melkoye where suicide or "unnatural deaths" became a common occurrence. The rate of suicide in settlements near Vologda and Arkhangel'sk appeared to be significantly higher among females than among males. According to one report, a number of women took their own lives after their husbands or children were shipped to other camps or died.[228] Suicide among Mennonite exiles also occurred in camps near Istupil, Lunevka, Arkhangel'sk, and the Ural Mountains, where the practice of separating children from their parents was commonplace. Although some camp officials granted parents special permission and travelling papers to visit their separated family members on special holidays, some Mennonites nevertheless took their own lives to put an end to the pain of separation.[229]

The high incidence of starvation and fatal diseases in the camps also ensured that the lives of many Mennonite exiles was cut short. As was noted above, perennial shortages of food resulted in widespread hunger and fatal malnutrition in many camps. At resettlements in the vicinity of Akmolinsk, Tomsk, Omsk, Bogoslavskii, Lunevka, and the Chizhapka River, starvation was a leading cause of death. The lack of adequate food rations combined with extreme exhaustion also contributed to major outbreaks of disease, such as typhus, which claimed the lives of countless exiles. In camps near Vologda, Arkhangel'sk, Nizhniy Tagil, Ansherka Station, Omsk, Chelyabinsk, Bogoslavskii, Sotrino, Kalchim, Lunevka, Qaraghandy, and Turkestan, hunger and typhus reportedly took the greatest number of lives.[230] In January of 1932, for example, there were approximately 30 people who were ill with typhus in a camp near Nizhniy Tagil. At a camp near Omsk, there were 50 people in one of the barracks who succumbed to the disease in late August of 1932. Other diseases which claimed the lives of Mennonites in exile included scurvy, grippe, tuberculosis, dysentery, dropsy, scarlet fever, and pneumonia. A severe outbreak of scurvy affected resettlers at a camp near Melkoye in mid-1932; at the same time, scurvy also claimed the lives of 26 people at camps near Usakovskii and Baschenevskii. A number of Mennonites who were exiled to camps in the vicinity of the Usa and Pechora Rivers suffered from scurvy, tuberculosis, dropsy, and jaundice.[231] With exiles being physically weak and debilitated from working long hours with insufficient food rations, it did not take long for the camps to teem with sickly residents suffering from a host of fatal diseases.

Camp authorities followed a variety of procedures in dealing with epidemic outbreaks. At camps near Vologda, Arkhangel'sk, Melkoye, and the Kolchum, for example, exiles who were very ill or badly injured were given limited medical attention. Occasionally, exiles were admitted to a nearby hospital (which was usually overcrowded, understaffed, and unsanitary), but only if camp officials and a local physician believed that hospitalization was warranted. In other camps, however, exiles were denied any medical attention whatsoever. Sometimes this was because the nearest physician, clinic, or hospital was too far away from the camp. This was the complaint of a Mennonite at Lunevka who stated that her spouse died a premature death because the nearest hospital was too distant from the camp to warrant transporting him there.[232] More often than not, however, camp officials adopted a policy that did not permit exiles to receive any medical attention, regardless of how close a doctor or hospital was. This was the attitude of camp authorities in charge of settlements near Toshkent, Omsk, Verrolyuvotinovka, and Tomsk. These officials categorically refused to permit exiles to travel to the nearest city or village for medical treatment; they also did not allow local physicians to enter the camps to treat resettlers who required medical attention. Those exiles who were denied medical treatment were often housed in a barrack which was designated as the camp infirmary and which was usually overcrowded and unsanitary. Such living conditions often made the ill more susceptible to contracting additional illnesses from other infirm exiles. Some infirmaries became hotbeds for a wide variety of diseases that reached epidemic proportions in some exile settlements.

Such was the case at a camp near Narym where an outbreak of one disease resulted in the deaths of 100 people in a 5-week period.[233] In those camps where several epidemics followed each other in close succession, the decimation of a camp's population could take place within a few months.

Premature death was the common fate of many Mennonite resettlers at this time. The number of people who died from suicide, work-related accidents, starvation, and disease was alarmingly high in the camps. In the early spring of 1930, for instance, a Mennonite reported that an average of 3 to 5 exiles died every day in his camp near Tomsk. There were as many as 12 children who died per day at another camp near Tomsk. High death rates were also recorded at a camp near Tiazhin where 300 children (15% of the population) died within the first month of exile, and at a settlement on the coast of the White Sea, where an average of 50 people died every day.[234] The death rates at other camps were even more astounding. A Mennonite exiled to a settlement near Takmak reported that the death toll in his camp was sometimes as high as 200 people per day. Other camps that witnessed unusually high death rates in their exile populations included those in the vicinity of Solovetskiye Ostrova, Nizhniy Tagil, and Vologda. In a 3,000-person barrack at a camp near Solovetskiye Ostrova, for instance, there were 1,200 deaths in a 3-month period. Similarly, 2,000 of the 7,000 people who lived in an exile settlement near Nizhniy Tagil were dead within 1 year. Even higher death tolls were recorded at a settlement near Vologda where approximately 4,000 of the 40,000 exiles succumbed to death shortly after their arrival.[235] Escalating death rates such as these clearly indicated to many exiles that their chances of surviving Soviet concentration camps were very small indeed.

The exile camps decimated the Soviet Mennonite population. The incidence of premature death for Mennonite exiles often exceeded the rate of famine-related deaths in some Mennonite villages in 1932 and 1933. Of all the dekulakization measures that were employed in the early 1930s, exile resulted in the largest loss of Mennonite lives. This was the legacy of the government's exile campaigns.

Conclusion

By all accounts, the government's program to liquidate the kulak was a resounding success. The program had achieved its goal of eliminating those elements in society alleged to be opponents of collectivization and creating sufficient terror in the countryside to drive Soviet peasants onto collective farms.

How successful was dekulakization in the Mennonite colonies? In the vast majority of their settlements, dekulakization occurred at a higher rate than in surrounding Ukrainian and Russian villages. One reason for this was that Mennonites epitomized the definition of the "kulak." Mennonites were a non-Slavic, German-speaking religious minority who were viewed as being more prosperous than their Ukrainian and Russian neighbours. Mennonites also had a history of opposition to the Soviet state: some Mennonites had collaborated with the German-Austrian armies during World I and later with the White Army during the Civil War; thousands of them had also emigrated to North America in the mid- and late-1920s in an attempt to escape from communism; thousands of other Mennonites were in constant communication with the capitalist West through the food parcels and letters that they received from relatives and friends in North America and Europe. This made them the prime, and often the first, candidates for dekulakization. The result was that dekulakization rates in the majority of Mennonite settlements in Ukraine and the Crimea were often higher (20% to 25%) than the rates in Ukrainian and Russian-populated communities (10% to 20%).[236]

Aside from the percentage of Mennonites who were dekulakized, the government's dekulakization program had accomplished that which wars and revolutions had failed to bring about: the final destruction of the economic, social, religious, and political institutions of the Mennonite community, and the forced integration of the Mennonite population into the Ukrainian countryside. Until 1927, many institutions of the Mennonite community continued to exist, and Mennonites had worked hard to modify and improve these institutions to ensure that they would survive in the new communist state. Dekulakization, however, razed the communities to the ground, permanently dismembering the constituent components of the colonies that had exist for over two hundred years. Nothing before or after dekulakization had such a permanent destructive impact on the community. In this respect, dekulakization forced Mennonites to work, live, and die in new communities that were not based on religious tradition or ethnic identity, but rather on new economic, political, and social categories created by the Stalinist regime.

Which Mennonite institutions were destroyed? First, dekulakization destroyed whatever agricultural and commercial enterprises still existed in the Mennonite settlements in the mid-1920s. Although World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the Civil War had weakened some of the economic foundations of the community -- Mennonite estates and farmsteads were significantly reduced in size and many Mennonite commercial enterprises were nationalized -- Mennonites still continued to participate in the moderate capitalist enterprises permitted during NEP, and were often financially better off than their Ukrainian and Russian neighbours. Dekulakization changed the economic status of Mennonites forever. The government's high taxes and grain quotas, its expropriation and redistribution of Mennonite property, and its resettlement, exile, imprisonment, and execution of the most successful Mennonites ensured that the Mennonite colonies would never thrive again. All of this was done, of course, in the name of righting the wrong of past exploitation of the peasantry by the kulak. Dekulakization accomplished more than this in that it eliminated the natural economic leaders in the community and expropriated or destroyed the economic means that had previously enabled Mennonite settlements to flourish.

Dekulakization also levelled the social hierarchy that existed within the Mennonite colonies. Until the late 1920s, wealth, ethnicity, family background, and religious affiliation were factors that still largely determined the wide spectrum of social classes within the settlements. With dekulakization a new hierarchy of social status emerged. Defined by new factors such as landlessness, allegiance to the state, and membership in the Communist party, a social hierarchy emerged in Mennonite settlements which included such categories as kulak, collectivized peasant, activist, and Communist Party member. No longer at the top of their class system, Mennonite kulaks found themselves at the bottom of a social hierarchy that included not only Mennonites, but also Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, and ethnic minorities. In this respect, dekulakization and particularly resettlement and exile destroyed the remaining social and ethnic barriers that had previously isolated most Mennonites from their non-Mennonite neighbours.

Not every Mennonite during this time of persecution was a victim. Dekulakization also enabled some of the disadvantaged elements within Mennonite society to play an unprecedented political role in leading Mennonite-populated areas. During the early years of Bolshevik rule under Lenin, the Soviet Mennonite community was still largely governed by the same type of people who had governed the community over the previous two hundred years: that is, prominent Mennonite religious leaders, professionals, farmers, and former estate owners who directed the political and religious affairs of the colonies under Mennonite associations (such as the VBHH, AMLV, and KfK) permitted by the state. This was no longer the case after Stalin's accession to power. Dekulakization decapitated the traditional political and religious leadership in the colonies with the exile, imprisonment, and execution of Mennonite religious and political leaders. The vacuum was immediately filled by

Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, Germans, as well as Mennonites. Whether they were members of the village soviet, the Communist Party, or the ECDS, a significant number of Mennonites were actively involved at various levels in the political and administrative hierarchy of the Soviet government. This also marks an important development in Mennonite history in that it is one of the first times that a significant number of Mennonites ignored their longstanding Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition of noninvolvement in secular government institutions and became village representatives, activists, bureaucrats, administrators, and Communist Party members for the Soviet state.

Determining what motivated Mennonites to work for and collaborate with the state is not always easy. Unfortunately, there are very few biographies or diaries of Mennonite officials that explain their ideological and religious *volte-face* from what was regarded as acceptable Mennonite behaviour. From what is available, it is clear that the Soviet government was successful in creating conditions that were favourable for recruiting Mennonites to fight as foot soldiers in its class war against the kulak and to make life and death decisions that resulted in the resettlement, exile, imprisonment, and execution of fellow Mennonites. In some cases, government persuasion and propaganda convinced Mennonites, and especially those who were landless or disenchanted with their community, to join government ranks. In other cases, it was the government's promise of upward mobility (economic and social advancement) within a new socialist state that motivated Mennonites to sign on. Some of the Mennonites who joined for these reasons genuinely supported government policies. The fact that so many Mennonites began working for the state at the same time suggests that government coercion played an important role. The threat of being dekulakized, the desire to protect family members from the dekulakization process, the public exile and execution of enemies of the state, and the heart-wrenching letters from relatives and friends suffering in prisons and exile camps were just a few ways in which the state directly and indirectly coerced Mennonites to participate in the dekulakization process. In this respect, the state's dekulakization program fragmented the Mennonite colonies in an unprecedented manner; it succeeded in pitting Mennonite against Mennonite in the name of a political cause that suddenly became more important than the familial, religious, and community ideals that united Mennonites together during previous periods of persecution.

Whatever their motivation was to work for the state, these Mennonites played an active role in determining the pace and extent of dekulakization in their respective communities. As members of the executive committees of the CVP, RLDC, ECDS, local Communist Party cells, and other government agencies, Mennonites were given responsibility for carrying out directives from Kiev, and ensuring that quotas of kulaks from their respective jurisdictions were fulfilled. How they were supposed to accomplish this was sometimes spelled out in the orders that they received from their superiors; on other occasions, it was left to their own initiative as to how the orders would be fulfilled and which Mennonite households would be targeted for dekulakization. This may be one reason why the dekulakization rates varied significantly from one Mennonite village to another. It also helps to explain why some Mennonite kulaks and preachers were immediately dekulakized and exiled in 1929 and 1930 and why others were never dekulakized and were permitted to join collectives, or were spared from the process altogether. Mennonite officials had some say in who would be dekulakized and when, and they had the authority to stay the dekulakization of particular households if necessary. In granting reprieves to specific kulak households, however, Mennonite officials could themselves be accused of being kulak sympathizers and subsequently selected for dekulakization.

In this respect Mennonites who worked for the Soviet regime played a key role in the final destruction of their community. In stating this, it is not this writer's intention to exaggerate their responsibility or to minimize the culpability of Stalin and his governing bloc in the final destruction of the Mennonite community. It is simply an acknowledgement of what happened and of the fact that not all of the blame for what happened during the dekulakization of Soviet Mennonite colonies can be placed on the shoulders of those who lived outside the colonies.

The overwhelming majority of Mennonites, however, were not government officials and had no say in how dekulakization occurred within their settlements. They were not culpable for the crimes committed by the state, but neither were they passive victims; many Mennonites participated in both passive and active forms of resistance against the state during dekulakization. The trek to Moscow in the fall of 1929, the collection of monies to pay the additional taxes levied on Mennonite pastors and churches, the defiant participation in Mennonite religious life despite government prohibitions, the public acts of resistance against the expropriation of livestock and property, the acts of self-dekulakization to avoid state-sponsored dekulakization, and the increasing incidence of suicide were active and passive acts of resistance which Mennonites used to demonstrate their opposition to the regime. State authorities were often surprised by such acts of resistance from a religious group that for much of their history had been non-threatening and pacifistic. When confronted by such acts of resistance, authorities sometimes backed off from implementing their dekulakization policies, as when they allowed almost 3,500 Mennonites to emigrate in late 1929. Usually, however, there was little tolerance for such acts of defiance, and punishment for the same was often swift and merciless.

What happened to those who were punished? As was the case with Mennonite kulaks, religious leaders, and alternative service participants, Mennonites accused of resisting the government were imprisoned, exiled, or executed. This marks another success for the state's dekulakization program: the decimation of the Mennonite community and the exploitation of Mennonite labour in the nation's prisons and gulags. The majority of Mennonites who toiled in these camps and prisons were regarded by authorities as expendable slave labour. Such an attitude resulted in high mortality rates among Mennonite exiles and prisoners.

What is also remarkable is that some Mennonites also survived despite the dire circumstances of the Soviet penal system. Some did so by participating in acts of defiance against the regime; that is, by escaping from their camp and prison overlords. Others found strength by writing letters to their relatives in the West which not only petitioned for food, money, and prayers, but also detailed the inhumanity of the Soviet gulag system to the larger Mennonite community abroad. These letters also demonstrate how vital religious faith was for the day-to-day existence of the majority of Mennonite exiles and prisoners. Often loaded with biblical verses and apocalyptic images, the letters reflect the deep religious convictions of their authors. For many of them, their Christian faith was no longer garbed in Mennonite tradition and history; the dekulakization and exile process had stripped their faith to the bare essentials, forcing many to come to grapple with the belief system they inherited from their forebears. Without pastors and deacons to assist them, many Mennonite exiles and prisoners cultivated their religious faith on their own, in new clandestine communities of believers that included Mennonites as well as Russians, Ukrainians, and ethnic minorities.

And what happened to those who were eventually released from the camps and prisons? A handful moved to local cities and collective farms where they obtained positions as teachers, labourers, and collective farm workers. In this respect the incidence of involuntary mobility among Mennonite kulaks -- that is, Mennonites who improved their economic and social status after they finished their term in exile or imprisonment -- was negligible. Most returned to their homes villages in Ukraine and the Crimea to find that their land and property now belonged to local collectives.

The vast majority of Mennonites were not dekulakized; nevertheless, the dekulakization process left most of them dazed and terrorized. They had witnessed how dekulakization affected their neighbours, friends, and family members, and feared the consequences if they refused to move onto collectives. How the majority of Soviet Mennonites responded to this fear is the subject matter of the following chapter.

Endnotes for Chapter II

1. Dietrich Hildebrandt, "Die Mennoniten in Russland," in Die Mennoniten, ed. H.-J. Goertz (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1971), p. 198.

2. "Докладные записки... административных органов о политическом положении и классовой борьбе на селе, терроре и бандитизме кулачества...1928...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/2751, pp. 1ff; Davies, The Socialist Offensive, pp. 138ff, 229ff, 243ff.

3. "Директивные письма ЦК КП/б/У... о мобилизации 25000 коммунистов из промышленных областей для... ликвидации кулачества, как класса... 1930," ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3142, pp. 1ff; Viola, The Best Sons of the Fatherland, pp. 3ff, 43ff.

4. "Всем Окружкомам и Райкомам КП/б/У... С. Косиор, Секретарь ЦК КП/б/У... 30/1/1930...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3142, pp. 4ff; "О мероприятиях по ликвидации кулацких хозяйств в районах сплошной коллективизации...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3142, pp. 16ff; Conquest, The Harvest of Sorrow, pp. 115ff.

5. "Докладные записки ГПУ СССР в ЦК КП/б/У.... ликвидации кулачества, как класса...1930," ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3190, pp. 1ff; "Специальные сообщения ГПУ УССР о ходе выселения кулаков... 1930," ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3191, pp. 1ff.

6. "Ориентировочно установить по областям следующее распределение заключаемых в лагеря и подлежащих высылке...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3192, p. 18; "Всем Окружкомам и Райкомам КП/б/У... С. Косиор, Секретарь ЦК КП/б/У... 30/1/1930...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3142, pp. 4ff; "Всем ОПК и РПК...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3142, pp. 10ff; "О мероприятиях по ликвидации кулацких хозяйств в районах сплошной коллективизации...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3142, pp. 16ff; "Проекты постановлений Оргбюро, Подкоммиссий ЦК КП/б/У... о ликвидации кулачества, как класса...1930...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3153, pp. 1ff.

7. "Специальная сводка №... о реагировании крестьянства Украины на ликвидацию кулака, как класса... 1930, " ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3189; "До Всіх Окружкомів Райкомів КП(б)У... С. Косиор, Секретарь ЦК КП/б/У...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3142, pp. 37ff.

8. "Всем Окружкомам и Райпарткомам КП(б)У... С. Косиор, Секретарь ЦК КП/б/У...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3142, pp. 67ff; "Докладные записки, отчеты Запорожского КП/б/У... о ходе раскулачивания в округе....1930," ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3744, pp. 1ff; "План перевозок изъятого кулачества по Украине, потребности подвижного состава, с указанием дней вывоза, пунктов формирования и отправления...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3190, pp. 31ff; "Суммарная ведомость сроков операции по изъятию кулацкого элемента и перевозки его по железным дорогам Украины...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3190, pp. 63ff; "Справка...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3190, pp. 61ff; "Организационно-практические предложения о ликвидации кулачества как класса.... " ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3153, pp. 26f.

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10. “Постановление ЦК КП/б/У...1931,” ЦДАГОУ:1/20/III/4277, pp. 42f; “Директивные письма, телеграммы ЦК КП/б/У... о борьбе с кулацким влиянием в колхозах... 1932,” ЦДАГОУ:1/20/III/5384, pp. 1ff.

11. James R. Harris, “The Growth of the Gulag: Forced Labor in the Urals Region, 1929-31,” Russian Review 56 (1997): 265-280; Roy Medvedev, Let History Judge (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), p. 100;

12. For government policies pertaining to dekulakization and collectivization programs in regions populated by national minorities such as the Mennonites, see “Протоколи... засідань німецьких райвиконкомів... 1929-30....” ЦДАВОВ:413/1/443, pp. 1ff; “Листування... хід колективізації в національних районах... 1930,” ЦДАВОВ:413/1/449; “Документи II Всеукраїнської наради про роботу серед національних меншостей... 1930....” ЦДАВОВ:413/1/482.

13. "Bericht über Verhaftung, Einkerkung, Verfolgung der Deutschen," CGWD:146/1/238- 460; J. Loewen, Jasykowo (Winnipeg: Elisabeth Loewen,1967), p. 61; "Russland," ZB, 19 February 1930, p. 12.

14. “Список членов и кандидатов Хортицкого Райисполкома....” ГАЗО:235/1/811, pp. 46f; “Хортицкому Райполит совету.... 1930,” ГАЗО:235/2/58, p. 45; "Список служащих Орловского с/совета:..." ГАЗО:3452/1/7, p. 92; “Состав Молочанской Парторганизации,” in Фонд 286, Опись 170, Связка 14, at Облпартархив Запорожского обкома КПУ, pp. 41ff (hereafter: ОЗоКПУ:286/170/14, pp. 41ff).

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24. “Tagesordnung... KNC... 22/III-1931,” ГАЗО:862/1/9, p. 10; “Протокол....” ГАЗО: 862/1/9, pp. 8; “An den... Dorfrat....” ГАЗО:1429/1/36, pp. 72, 78.

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31. “Молочанский район... Протокол... 1929/30,” ОЗоКПУ:286/13/1; “Молочанский район... Протокол №... 1931/32,” ОЗоКПУ:286/16/1; “Молочанский район... 23/II/1933,” ОЗоКПУ:286/122/8; “Запорожский Округ....” ОЗоКПУ:1/1/877, pp. 84ff, 225-259; “Хортицкий район....” ОЗоКПУ:7/1/140-4, pp. 7f, 44.

32. “... засідання Президії Запорізького округового виконавчого комітету....” ГАЗО: 235/1/813, pp. 1ff, 264ff; “Протокол №... заседания Президиума Хортицкого райисполкома... 1930,” ГАЗО:235/3/28, pp. 19ff; “Сельсовету....” ГАЗО:235/2/144.

33. “Витяг з протоколу № 48/440 засідання Президії ВУЦВК з 15-го квітня 1930....” ГАЗО:235/1/834, pp. 12f; “Список характеристик кулаков....“ ГАЗО:235/5/79; “Хортицкому райисполкому... Заявление....” ГАЗО:235/3/50.

34. “An alle Dorfräte....” ГАЗО:1429/1/36; “Список семейств Хортицкого района, которые эмигрировали в Москву с целью выезда в Америку,” ГАЗО:235/3/40 pp. 117f; “Село....” ГАЗО:235/3/50.

35. “Опис.....” ГАЗО:235/5/79, pp. 1ff, 7f, 10f, 34ff, 38; “Облікова відомість,” ГАЗО: 235/3/47.

36. “Erlass des Rates der Volkskommissäre. Über die Merkmale der Kulakenwirtschaften....” ГАЗО:235/1/730, pp. 23f; “Хортицький райвиконком... лист....” ГАЗО:235/3/52; “До всіх райвиконкомів....” ГАЗО:235/1/772, pp. 10, 13, 58, 165.

37. “Выписка из протокола заседания президиума Молочанского райисполкома... 30 ноября 1930....” ГАЗО:3452/1/6, p. 77; “Протокол № 10... заседания Президиума Хортицкого райисполкома...1930,” ГАЗО:235/3/28, pp. 19ff.

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Chapter III

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The Collectivization of the Mennonite Community in Ukraine and the Crimea

Collectivizing the Soviet Countryside

Terror, suffering, oppression, and torture were experienced not only by Mennonite kulaks but also by Mennonites who became members of the collective and state farms. Although the tribulations suffered by collectivized Mennonites were not always as horrific as those suffered by Mennonite kulaks, the government's use of draconian measures and mass terror to collectivize Mennonite communities in Ukraine and the Crimea between 1930 and 1933 succeeded in destroying a way of life for this religious sect. In the eyes of many Mennonites, collectivization reduced them to the status of serfs, a subjected population who were enthralled not by the Russian czar, but by the Soviet regime. To understand how this new expression of serfdom arose and how Mennonites coped with it, it is necessary to outline the broader social, political, and economic context in which Soviet Mennonites lived between 1930 and 1933. This will provide a backdrop for a more detailed analysis of the repercussions of the collectivization process on the Mennonite community in Ukraine and the Crimea.

As was noted in Chapter I, the government's decision to collectivize the Soviet Union was already made in 1928-29 and began to be implemented in 1929. At the 16th Party Congress in April 1929, the Central Committee made some projections concerning national collectivization rates during the country's First 5-Year Plan for agriculture; it expected that 9.6% of the peasantry would be collectivized by 1932-33 and 13.6% by 1933-34. These projected rates were later substantially inflated. In the summer of 1929 the State Planning Commission (*Gosplan*) determined that 2.5 million households must be collectivized in 1920-30, and by the fall of 1929 both the Central Agency for Collective Farm Administration (*Kolkhozcentre*) and *Sovnarkom* endorsed a plan to have 3.1 million peasant households collectivized by the end of 1930.[1] The impetus for these revisions were the lagging collectivization rates that were published earlier that summer. In June of 1929, for example, it was reported that only 5.6% of all peasant households in Ukraine were collectivized, 1.8% in the Moscow area, 3.2% in the Central Black-Earth region, 3.9% in the Central Volga region, 5.9% in the Lower Volga region, 5.2% in the Urals, and 7.3% in the North Caucasus. By mid-1929 a mere 3.9% of all peasant households in the USSR were in collective and state farms. To remedy this problem members of the Politburo and the Communist Party endorsed the policy of a more aggressive collectivization effort on a country-wide scale in November of 1929, with Stalin and his supporters demanding that the entire country be collectivized by 1930, preferably by the spring of that year. In January of 1930 the government revised some of it targets, expecting Ukraine to be collectivized by the autumn of 1930, the North Caucasus and Volga region by the spring of 1931, and the remaining grain-producing regions of the Soviet Union by the spring of 1932. The bottom line was that approximately 25 million peasant farms were to be transformed into 250,000 state-controlled farms by 1933. Although Soviet officials publicly declared in late 1929 that the peasantry must join the collectivization process on a voluntary basis, they also acknowledged that more drastic measures such as expropriation of property, imprisonment, and exile would have to be implemented to prompt peasants to move onto the collectives. The government left it to the discretion of local officials, Communist Party workers, and the 25,000ers -- many of whom were skilled workers, civil war veterans, shock workers, and activists who were openly hostile toward the peasantry because of ongoing grain shortages -- to determine to what extent these measures would be implemented within their respective jurisdictions.[2]

The government's predictions of how the peasantry would react to these coercive measures proved to be correct. By the early months of 1930 an atmosphere of mass terror created by the dekulakization campaigns compelled millions of Soviet peasants to surrender their land, property, livestock, and machinery to the state and move *en masse* onto collective farms. These peasants signed on as members at either local *kolkhozes* (which included farm collectives, *kommuna*, *artels*, and *tozes* and which often involved mixed farming practices) or at the larger *sovkhozes* (state farms which usually concentrated on producing one or two commodities, such as grain or beef).[3] As a result of this migration of peasant farmers to the collective and state farms, the percentages of collectivized peasant households in the USSR jumped from 7.5 % in October 1929 to 18.1% by January 1,1930 and to 31.7% by February 1, 1930. By March 1, 1930 the government could claim that 57.2% of all peasant households (or approximately 14,264,300 peasant households) in the USSR were in collective and state farms. Local officials in some regions could boast even more impressive rates of collectivization with Ukraine at 60.8% of all peasant households collectivized, the Moscow region at 74.2%, the Central Black-Earth region at 83.3%, the Central Volga area at 60.3%, the Lower Volga region at 70.1%, the Urals at 75.6%, and the North Caucasus at 79.4%.[4]

Not surprisingly, the government's push to collectivize millions of peasants in a very short period of time did encounter some resistance. Thousands of peasants refused to join the collective farms (hereafter referred to as "collective farms" or "collectives") and state farms, and instead incited anti-Soviet riots within the surrounding populations. Other farmers resisted the collectivization process by slaughtering their livestock rather than relinquishing it to collective farm authorities. In February and March of 1930 alone peasants destroyed approximately 14 million head of cattle. It was these significant losses of livestock and the disturbing increase in peasant violence that prompted the Soviet government to call a temporary halt to its crash collectivization campaign. On March 2, 1930 Stalin published an article entitled "Dizzy with Success" in which he blamed all of the perversions and excesses of the collectivization process on local officials and activists who mistakenly believed that they could force peasants to become collective farm members. After the publication of the article millions of collectivized peasants took their possessions and livestock and moved off the collectives. Consequently, the number of Soviet peasant households on collective farms plummeted to 38.6% percent in April 1930 and bottomed out at 21.5% in September 1930. Some regional rates dropped even more dramatically: by September of 1930, for example, the collectivization rate for Ukraine had dropped to 28.8%, the Moscow region to 7.1%, the Central Black-Earth region to 15.0%, the Central Volga to 24.3%, the Lower Volga to 36.1.%, the Urals to 21.6%, the North Caucasus to 51.1%.[5] With peasants leaving state and collective farms in droves, it did not take long for the Soviet government to recognize that coercive collectivization measures would have to be reinstated in order to stem the tide of peasant emigration from the collective farms and salvage whatever progress had previously been achieved with respect to the collectivization agenda.

Any respite that peasants enjoyed from the pressure to collectivize after the publication of Stalin's article lasted only until the fall of 1930. In September and October, the government again sanctioned the use of force to drive peasants back into the collective fold. By August 2, 1931, the Central Committee proudly reported that the collectivization process was essentially complete in the Steppe and Left Bank districts of Ukraine, in many areas in the North Caucasus, in regions along the Ural Mountains, and in areas along the Lower and Central Volga. Collectivization continued in many regions in 1932 and by

January of 1933 collective farms controlled 78% of the arable land in the Soviet Union (*kolkhozes* controlled 68% of all of the arable land in the USSR while *sovkhozes* controlled 10%). With such a high percentage of cultivated land under the control of collective farm authorities, Stalin confidently announced that the First 5-Year Plan was completed in 4 years and 3 months.[6]

Collectivizing the Mennonite Countryside

The collectivization of Mennonite farmland imitated the ebb and flow of the collectivization process in the rest of the country. In 1929, for example, government officials in the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies initially failed to appreciate how quickly the government wanted to attain its collectivization goals, and thus predicted that perhaps 50% of the farms in their areas would be collectivized over a 4-year period. In the Halbstadt (Molotschna) *rayon*, for example, local party activists anticipated that 40% of the farms in the region would be collectivized by the end of 1930, 50% by the end of 1931, and 55% by the end of 1933.[7] After Stalin's speeches in December 1929 and January 1930, however, it became clear to these activists that the collectivization pace had to speed up significantly, and thus they quickly revised their initial targets. In the early months of 1930, for instance, local government agencies and soviets, such as the Zaporizhzhia Executive Committee of the Regional Soviet of People's Deputies (ECRS) and the Schöneberg (Chortitza) village soviet, predicted that nearly 100% of the region would be collectivized before the end of 1930, if not by March 1930.[8] Government agencies and soviets also circulated directives to local officials explaining how the countryside would help to meet Stalin's 5-Year Plan in 4 years, and which measures would be used to encourage peasants to leave their farms and move onto the collectives. To accomplish this, some officials organized government-sponsored conferences and propaganda programs to tout the advantages of the collective-farm system and to convince Mennonite farmers to surrender their land and property and join local collectives. In February of 1930, for instance, officials in one village in the Chortitza region held a conference for local farmers and delegates to address such diverse issues as: should German-speaking villages be taxed at higher rates than Ukrainian villages?; why were small, privately-owned farming enterprises so unproductive?; what strategies should be employed to convince more women to join collective farms?; what should be done with churches and clergymen?; what were the inherent problems in the American capitalistic system?; and what would it take to eliminate the kulak from the countryside?[9]

In other villages, however, authorities utilized less diplomatic approaches to convince farmers of the correctness of the government's collectivization program. Instead of convening information conferences, they imposed high taxes and unreasonable grain quotas on Mennonite farms and villages that were already under severe financial burdens from previous tax levies. In January of 1930, for example, local officials required the village of Burwalde (Chortitza) to pay a tax levy of over 7,000 rubles, Schöneberg (Chortitza) over 8,000 rubles, and Neuenberg (Chortitza) over 12,000 rubles.[10] The same officials also imposed inordinate grain quotas on these villages: Neuenberg and Schöneberg were required to supply over 8,000 poods of grain each, while Burwalde was ordered to deliver over 11,000 poods. Having already surrendered most of their money and grain to pay excessive taxes and grain quotas for 1928 and 1929, many Mennonites did not have enough resources to meet these additional government demands, and consequently had no alternative but to relinquish their property to the state and sign on as members of the local collective farm.[11]

Officials employed other harsh and indiscriminate measures to speed up the collectivization process within their jurisdiction. In the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies, for instance, it was common practice for local authorities to confiscate all of the horses and most of the cattle belonging to Mennonite farmers in a particular village as soon as there was any indication that a collective farm was about to be established in the area. To counter these confiscation measures, some Mennonites slaughtered their livestock rather than hand their animals over to collective farm authorities. Most Mennonites, however, following the biblical commandment to obey the government, surrendered their livestock to authorities and signed statements declaring that they voluntarily donated their farm animals to the collective or state farm. Farmers were also ordered to supply fodder to feed the recently confiscated livestock.[12] At the same time that they confiscated the farm animals, authorities commandeered the agricultural machinery of Mennonite farmers in the name of the local collective farms. Tractors, threshing machines, plows, and harrows were snatched up by collective farms in the Chortitza, Liebenau (Molotschna), Grünfeld (Borozenko [Kamianka]), Nikolayevka (Schönfeld [Ternuvate]), Sagradowka, and Memrik [Selydove] regions without remuneration to their Mennonite owners.[13] After a Mennonite household saw most or all of its land, livestock, and machinery impressed by authorities, there was little else to do except sign on for membership at the nearest collective farm.

The ever-present threat of starvation also compelled Mennonite farmers to become members of collective or state farms. Although widespread famine conditions were not present in Ukraine and the Crimea until 1932 and 1933, malnutrition and starvation were prevalent in some Mennonite communities from the late 1920's through to 1931. The burdensome grain quotas and taxes of 1928 and 1929 left a significant number of Mennonite farmers without enough grain or money to sustain their families for any length of time; consequently, many Mennonite families joined the collectives in order to avoid starvation. As one Mennonite farmer noted when evaluating his options in February of 1931, "one can either starve at home or work in the artel."[14]

Mennonite farmers also joined the collective farms in order to avoid possible dekulakization. The terrible treatment of the disenfranchised, the regular dispossession and confiscation raids, the long caravans of red wagons leaving the Crimea and Ukraine, and the tales of suffering and death in the regime's exile camps convinced large numbers of Mennonites who were not yet dekulakized to forfeit their land and property and join a nearby collective or state farm. Such was the experience of Mennonite farmers in the vicinity of Gnadenfeld (Molotschna) who joined the newly established *Karl Marx* collective as a result of the "fight against the kulak." Similarly, the war waged against the kulaks and clergymen evoked such fear in villagers in the Chortitza colony that they were quite willing to sign on at a local collective at once.[15] The brutal treatment of Mennonite kulaks and clergymen proved to be one of the most effective means of compelling farmers to move to collective farm operations.

In many Mennonite-populated regions, the accelerated collectivization process was already completed by the end of 1930, and certainly by the end of 1931. Collective and state farms ranging in size from 12 families (in the region of Grünfeld, Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]) to 39 villages (the *Giant* collective near Spat [Oktiabrs'ke, Crimea]) were established in almost every region and village of the Crimea and Ukraine. Some collectives, such as the one near Memrik [Selydove], had as many as 1,300 members and between 2,000 and 3,000 dessiatines of land. It did not take long for these collectives to absorb most of the surrounding farmland, and in some regions all of the privately owned businesses and land.[16] By the spring of 1930, for instance, nearly all of the independently owned farms in Chortitza and Rosental (Chortitza) were incorporated into local collectives; in the village of Schöneberg (Chortitza), all but 3 of the privately owned farms (95.5%) in the area constituted collective farm soil. Other villages and regions also witnessed a high rate of collectivization in 1930. In mid-April of 1930, for example, 2 *rayons* in the Memrik [Selydove] region were reportedly totally collectivized, and in the village of Steinfeld (Molotschna) there were predictions that the region would be completely collectivized by the end of the year. This accelerated rate of collectivization also continued into 1931. In the Sagradowka region 95% of the farmland was administered by collective farm authorities before 1932. By the end of 1931, most farms in the Molotschna colony and all farms in the Michaelsburg (Fürstenland [Rohachyk]) region had been swallowed up by collectives.[17]

The names assigned to these collective farms frequently indicated the ethnic origins of their members. In the Chortitza-Yazykovo region, for example, many of the collectives adopted German-sounding names, albeit with strong socialist connections, such as: *Karl Marx*, *Rote Heimat*, *Rote Fahne*, *Karl Liebknecht*, *Torgler*, *Bauer*, *Ernst Thälmann*, *Rosa Luxemburg*, *Landmann*, *Otto Schmidt*, *Euzenfeld*, and *Schnitter*." Other Chortitza-Yazykovo collective farms, however, adopted names that were commonplace at many other collectives in the USSR: *International*, *Kommune International*, *III. Internationale*, *Paxar*, *Chatajewitsch*, *Kaganowitsch*, *Lenin*, *Rekord*, *Progress*, *Dimitrow*, *Faktor*, *Balizki*, *Litwinow*, *Tschubar*, *Kolos*, *Proletar*, *Triumph*, *Chleborob*, *Tschernow*, *Budjonny*, *Tscherwonny Jar*, *Betrb. International*, and *Dnjeprostroj*.[18] In and around the Molotschna area, collectives were often named after villages such as Rosenort, Tiege, Blumenort, and Ohrloff; in some cases, however, German- and Soviet-style names were used, such as *Sovietsteppe*, *Nadepeda*, *Kultura*, *Fortschritt*, *10 Jahre Oktoberrevolution*, *Arance*, *Nadezhda*, and *Einsicht*.[19]

Notwithstanding the enormous state-sponsored pressure to join the collectives, not every Mennonite signed on as a member in 1930 and 1931. There were Mennonites who abandoned their land and homes and migrated to large villages and cities in the hope of finding employment. Since dekulakization and collectivization measures were carried out on a much smaller scale in the urban centres, some found the cities and larger villages to be a safe haven from the deplorable treatment of peasants living in the countryside. Landing a job in the city was no easy task, however, as authorities required potential employees to have the proper internal passports, registrations cards, and working papers. In spite of these obstacles, Mennonites obtained employment in offices, hospitals, pharmacies, research laboratories, and on railway lines and road construction crews in urban centres across Ukraine and the Crimea.[20] Perhaps the largest congregation of urban Mennonites was in Chortitza, a small industrial city where hundreds of Mennonites obtained work in agricultural implement assembly factories (*Communar* and *Engels*) and at the nearby

Dnieper dam electrification project. A condition of employment at many of these factories and industrialization projects was membership in the Communist Party or state-sanctioned trade union; this was the case at the *Communar* factory where the majority of Mennonite workers were card-carrying party members. Membership in the Communist Party was also a requirement for Mennonites who worked in local German-language newspapers (such as Deutscher Kollectivist and Stürmer) that were sponsored by the state.[21]

The wages of these urban Mennonite workers varied significantly from job to job. Labourers working in one of the Chortitza factories received as much as 200 rubles a month, while those cleaning snow from railway cars and tracks would be paid as little as 90 kopecks for a day's work. Even those earning 200 rubles per month often found it impossible to save enough money to pay escalating taxes and the inflated costs of rent and food.[22] Although urban workers sometimes received food rations to supplement their wages, the rations were too small to feed the workers properly, let alone their families. In many cases, the rations included only a piece of bread, a bowl of soup, and occasionally a piece of meat -- a diet that rarely sustained an adult worker. Occasionally these working conditions aroused the ire of workers to such an extent that they rioted for better working and living conditions.[23] While such examples of defiance were uncommon, they did erupt with enough frequency to remind authorities of the widespread urban discontent in many parts of the country.

The movement of Mennonite families to urban centres and collectives during Soviet collectivization constituted one of the largest migrations in Mennonite history. Although this migration did not involve a trek across borders and countries -- in many cases the migration involved no more than moving into a neighbour's house or animal stall -- it did uproot Mennonite families from their own plot of ground, which had often been owned by the same family for more than a century. The ever-present threat of being dekulakized also compelled thousands of Mennonites to seek refuge in factories or collective farms. This migration to the factory or the collective farm naturally left most Mennonites feeling disconnected from their land and homes and very anxious about their future, a common experience for millions of Ukrainians and Russians who were also collectivized.

In this respect the collectivization of Mennonite farms in Ukraine and the Crimea did not differ significantly from that of neighbouring Ukrainian and Russian communities. If there were any differences in the collectivization experiences between Mennonite communities and non-Mennonite communities, they deal with collectivization percentages and rates. Mennonite settlements often collectivized at a faster rate than non-Mennonite communities. In those communities where dekulakization had been particularly intense, Mennonite inhabitants felt that the best way to avoid dekulakization was to become a collective farm member. Faced with the demise of the Mennonite institutions that once protected them and surrounded by an overwhelmingly Slavic population, Mennonite households became keenly aware of their minority status, recognized that they could not survive on their own, and sought refuge in state-sanctioned institutions such as collective farms or factories.

The government also initiated measures to encourage more Mennonites to join collective farms and factories. State authorities allowed German to be the language of discourse in collectives and factories predominantly populated by Mennonites, supported the publication of local state-controlled newspapers in the German language, and permitted Mennonites to establish and operate "Mennonite" collectives in which every member was of Mennonite origin. Although such government concessions could not make up for the personal loss and suffering already experienced by collectivized Mennonites, they helped to mollify some of the concerns that Mennonites had with respect to their future in the USSR.

Who Collectivized Mennonite Households?

Who was responsible for collectivizing the Mennonite countryside? As was discussed in Chapter II, the membership lists of local government agencies, such as village soviets and the ECDS, that carried out the dekulakization and collectivization programs in Mennonite-populated regions frequently included Mennonite names. The majority of Mennonite men and women who worked on the collectivization campaigns did so within the context of the village soviet. Apart from their duties to dekulakize local villagers, hundreds of Mennonites on the membership rolls of village soviets were put in charge of creating and supervising local collective farms.[24] To accomplish these tasks, the village soviets were often subdivided into sub-commissions and committees that were delegated specific duties. The relatively small village soviet of Burwalde (Chortitza), for instance, included Mennonites who participated in the executive committee (a 9-member group that ensured that directives from the ECDS, the 25,000ers, and the Communist Party were implemented), the land commission (a 6-member group dealing with collectivization and expropriation issues), the culture commission (a 1-person committee which focused on political education and social issues), the health commission, and a production commission (which created grain quotas and seeding programs).[25] Soviets in other Mennonite villages also organized investigation commissions (which determined the social status and property holdings of local peasants), finance commissions (which monitored the collection and expenditure of taxes), and "help" commissions (which worked with the Red Cross to address the needs of the poorer inhabitants in the community). To ensure that members of the commissions would not assume that their status in the community was secure, representatives of the local ECDS, Communist Party cell, Komsomol, and CVP routinely vetted the activities of commission members, and those who failed the vetting process were purged from the village soviet and often exiled.[26]

The tasks carried out by the different village soviet commissions were many and varied, and had significant repercussions for their communities. Some of the tasks of the commissions included: dissolving Mennonite organizations (such as the KfK) and replacing them with soviet-sponsored credit agencies; implementing the directives on collectivization and grain production outlined in Stalin's letters to the nation; drafting protocols for the ECDS that detailed the progress of the 5-Year Plan; reporting to the ECDS on the creation, size, and population of local collectives; providing information to the ECDS concerning the social status and ethnic backgrounds of collectivized farmers in the area; and planning crop production quotas and seeding programs. The village soviet commissions also performed more mundane tasks such as creating a registry for village horses, organizing lotteries to raise money for local projects, curbing black market activities, supervising campaigns to eliminate field mice, and dealing with matters of concern for local schools.[27] In order to claim popular support for their decisions, soviet commissions regularly convened village assembly meetings (the *skhod*) where their resolutions were often rubber-stamped without any debate by villagers. The protocols of these village meetings indicate that those in attendance included members of the soviet, the CVP, the Communist Party, as well as "poor and middle farmers." In some villages such as Lichtenau (Molotschna), Münsterburg (Molotschna), and Altonau (Molotschna), the overwhelming majority of officials who dictated the agenda of the village meetings and who drafted resolutions affecting the land, livestock, and status of all members of the villages were of Mennonite background.[28]

Mennonite participation in the CVP, which also played an important role in determining how collectivization would proceed in the countryside, was also significant. In the villages of Pawlowka (Chortitza), Nieder-Chortitza (Chortitza), Burwalde (Chortitza), and

Neuendorf (Chortitza), for instance, Mennonites who attained the ranks of president and secretary of the village CVP were often members of the Communist Party or the Komsomol.[29] While they worked on the CVP executive, Mennonites made decisions concerning who among their co-religionists would be allowed to keep their right of citizenship and allowed to vote in village soviet meetings, and who could be classified as "poor peasants" or "farm labourers" and allowed immediate entrance into a local collective. The village CVP also closely monitored the activities of local collectives, providing them with advice on everything from staging musicals at collective farm meetings to disciplining collective farm members who did not display the proper socialist attitude in their day-to-day activities.[30]

Mennonites who had higher political ambitions and obtained positions in the upper echelons of the ECDS coordinated the collectivization program in their regions. In Mennonite-populated areas such as Chortitza and Molotschna, the mandate of the ECDS in local collectivization programs included such diverse tasks as the following: issuing instructions to those working in the village soviets and CVP; controlling the import and export of food and goods into the region; monitoring the activities of those Mennonites who tried unsuccessfully to emigrate from the USSR in 1928 and 1929; vetting all potential candidates for membership in surrounding village soviets; organizing the "election" of reliable persons to important positions in the community; assisting in planning local crop and livestock production quotas; monitoring the preparation and handling of food provisions and meat; organizing local military and patriotic clubs; renovating local schools, factories, theatres, and electrical stations; and assisting in industrialization projects.[31] With respect to the collective farms, some of the more important functions of the ECDS included the following: implementing directives from senior Soviet government departments; working on plans to ensure that the 5-Year plan would be realized in 4 years; carrying out the government's cultural work among collective farm members; organizing credit, corn, and seed cooperatives needed to provide financing for local collective farm operations; and addressing the various economic, educational, and social concerns of the villages in their jurisdiction.[32]

Mennonites working in the RLDC had the task of redistributing former kulak land and property among the poorer peasantry and the collective farms. In the Chortitza region, for example, the Mennonite director of the Chortitza RLDC issued directives on the redistribution of land formerly owned by fellow Mennonites. To carry out the redistribution process, the RLDC recruited members from local soviets and the CVP to prepare property, livestock, machinery, and land registries of individual households and to characterize the social background of each household (i.e. whether they were kulaks, middle peasants, poor peasants, or labourers, and whether they were members of the Communist Party, Komsomol, CVP, or collective farm).[33] On the basis of this information, the RLDC executive decided how thousands of dessiatines of land, thousands of head of livestock, and countless pieces of agricultural equipment were to be redistributed in the name of the peasantry -- decisions that were determined more by political ideology rather than agricultural expertise. The RLDC also addressed sanitation and food poisoning problems in the local collectives, advised collective farm workers on the proper sowing of winter wheat, suggested methods of eliminating vermin and agricultural pests, and coordinated the construction of silage/grain silos.[34]

Mennonites also assisted the collectivization program by working as the "District Inspector" and in such Soviet-sponsored agencies as *Robos* (a local trade union), Revolutionary Committee (*Revkom*), the Village bank (VB), the District Control Commission of the Communist Party of Ukraine (DCC), DEC, WPIC, District Collective Farm Livestock Union (DCFLU), District Tax Commission (DTC), and ECDS. Mennonites who served as the District Inspector and in *Robos*, *Revkom*, VB, DCC, DEC, WPIC, DCFLU, and DTC routinely passed decisions regarding the tax liabilities of their co-religionists, the number of rubles a particular village would be allowed to borrow for farming purposes, the number of poods of grain, vegetables, and produce that collective farms in a region would be required to produce, the creation of telephone networks, and the manner in which local soviets and collective farms were to operate.[35]

Mennonites also furthered the state's collectivization efforts by becoming members and directors of the local cells of the Communist Party. As the eyes and ears of the Communist Party at the Mennonite village level, these Mennonite members were recruited to monitor the pace of the collectivization process in a particular region and to provide reports on those Mennonites who resisted the collectivization process. Some also took an active role in developing policy at the local Communist Party cells, participating in the decision making process on such diverse matters as which Mennonite properties were to be confiscated and collectivized, how Komsomol and Pioneer cells were to be organized, and what role the party should have in influencing Mennonite youth.[36] Mennonite Communist Party members were also given the task of organizing local military, rifle and *Osoawiochim* cells for civilian military instruction, monitoring the activities of economic associations and village and regional soviets such as the ECDS, carrying out anti-religious activities, confiscating the property of those sympathetic to Hitler, and dictating the best approach in seeding and harvesting grain to local collectives. To attract German-speaking recruits such as the Mennonites, the Communist Party created a German sub-organization which translated policy decisions from the Party's hierarchy in Moscow, Kiev, and Kharkiv into the German language. Communist Party schools were established in Mennonite-populated areas to teach these new members how to sovietize fellow Mennonites (through seminars, theatrical plays, and literature) and how to carry out their cultural work as party activists in their villages.[37]

The Soviet government relied heavily on the assistance of Mennonites who worked for the state to collectivize the Mennonite countryside. At every level of local government -- from village soviets up to the executive committees of the ECDS and the local Communist Party cells -- Mennonites provided invaluable information to their superiors on how to convert Mennonite settlements into collective farms. Mennonite bureaucrats developed tax and grain quota policies, characterized local households as "kulak," "peasant," or "farm labourer," sat on investigation commissions, and dissolved Mennonite associations and institutions. Given this intimate Mennonite involvement in the collectivization process, it is incorrect to assume that Mennonites were only passive participants in the process. Whatever their motive, Mennonites who worked for the state had an important part to play in how collectivization would proceed in their settlements and which of their traditional Mennonite institutions would remain intact.

At the same time, Mennonites who colluded with the Soviet government had an important part to play in the establishment of the new political and social order that would govern Soviet Mennonite life until the invasion of the German Wehrmacht during World War II. As the state-appointed leaders of their communities, these Mennonites were responsible for socializing the Mennonite countryside and creating new political and social hierarchies in their communities; they determined who was eligible to join the collectives, who could assume positions of authority, and what cultural and social activities would be allowed to flourish. In carrying out their mandate, many followed the frequently vague and arbitrary directives from Kiev and Moscow. Often unclear as to what the central government expected of them, Mennonite officials used their own discretion in interpreting how these directives were to be implemented. As a result, the rules and guidelines imposed by these officials varied significantly from one region to another, and from one collective farm to another. In some regions, for example, Mennonite officials imposed harsh restrictions on local inhabitants, forbidding anything that smacked of Mennonite culture and tradition; in other areas, however, Mennonite authorities were less demanding, and even went so far as to allow some Mennonite churches to function, albeit in a restricted capacity. Consequently, there was no single political and social order that governed the Mennonite countryside in the early 1930s; each region had its own political and social order that was less uniform and more unpredictable than the political and social order that formerly governed the Mennonite communities.

Membership Has Its Privileges

Excessive government pressure eventually compelled thousands of Mennonites to relinquish their farms to local collectives. But as many eventually discovered joining a collective farm was not always a straightforward, simple process. One reason was because strict government ordinances restricted who could establish or join a collective. One of these ordinances, for example, prevented anyone who did not qualify as a "poor peasant" or a "middle peasant" from signing on as a member. In many regions only enfranchised farmers were permitted to join a collective, and local village soviets kept a current tally of those Mennonites who had proper registration cards, had not been disenfranchised, and were entitled to vote at village meetings.[38] In other areas, however, the government ordinances were not always strictly adhered to, and disenfranchised peasants, including kulaks, were allowed to bring applications to become members of the local collective. This was the case in the village of Rosenort (Molotschna), where a Mennonite kulak who was dispossessed of his property and stripped of his civil rights was allowed to bring a petition to the village soviet to become a collective farm member and participate in the "socialist construction of agriculture in the village." In Schöneberg (Chortitza) disenfranchised farmers were permitted to join the collective if they forfeited all of their property and livestock to the collective authorities.[39] The practice of admitting disenfranchised Mennonite kulaks was the exception, however, not the rule.

Another government regulation stipulated that in order to create a collective farm, there must be at least 50 able-bodied people, all of whom are more than 18 years of age. This did not mean, however, that communities with fewer than the required number of able-bodied people could not collectivize. In Schirokoye (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), for example, 18 Mennonite households with less than 40 adults, signed incorporating documents on June 28, 1930 to create the *Forward Soz.*[40] In small Mennonite communities such as this, the pervasive fear of being ostracized and dekulakized put enormous pressure on all eligible households to establish or join the collective *en masse*.

Government regulations could also make joining a collective farm a very costly undertaking. Often the current members of the collective determined which prospective applicants would be permitted to join the collective and what their entrance and membership fees would be. Although government regulations suggested that membership fees should range between 5 and 100 rubles, individual collective farms often charged higher amounts and required the applicant household to make a voluntary donation of whatever livestock, machinery, or personal possessions it still possessed. At one particular collective any man who previously had an average yearly income of 500 rubles was required to pay 100 rubles for his membership fee; he also paid an additional 50 rubles for a membership for his wife and 25 rubles for each child. The entrance fee at another collective was set at 150 rubles; if an applicant was too poor to pay, a local kulak who was not entitled to join the collective was ordered to pay the entrance fee on behalf of the impoverished applicant.[41]

Once the entrance fee was paid the new member was required to follow a rather strict set of government-prescribed rules for commune life. Members were required to adhere to a book of regulations that detailed the "dos and don'ts" of life as a collective farm member. The handbook also stressed the need for every collective farm member to participate in the cultural and political activities in the collective, the hierarchy of the collective farm authority, the role of the various collective farm commissions in coordinating day-to-day operations, the high standard of proficiency and work ethic that each member was to exemplify, and the punishment of expulsion and exile for those members who failed to meet the standards of the collective farm.[42]

Recently admitted collective farm members were also required to surrender their land and homes to collective farm authorities. At some collectives near Chortitza and Liebenau (Molotschna), for example, each household was required to transfer ownership of its land to the collective farms; as a gesture of good will, collective farm authorities allotted a small parcel of land -- usually ½ a hectare -- to each collective farm household for growing their own fruit and vegetables. Few families were allowed to remain in their own homes. It was not uncommon for several collectivized families to share a house or hut at the same time. Mennonite families such as those in a collective near Friedensfeld were also shuffled from one house to another every few months. The rationale for requiring the collective farm families to share accommodation or move from one house to another was that it minimized class antagonism between wealthier and poorer collectivized members.[43] There were, of course, economic and practical motives for requiring collective farm families to share accommodation. Collective farms needed extra buildings to carry out agricultural, social, and administrative activities, and thus it was not uncommon for Mennonite homes to be converted into livestock stalls, milking parlours, poultry barns, incubator stations, smithies, workshops, clubs, dining halls, reading halls, village council chambers, and theatres.[44] Officials at the *International* commune and the *Alpha* artel in the Chortitza colony, for instance, used two Mennonite homes as a veterinary clinic and a kindergarten. One collective even modified a Mennonite residence to become a plant for processing silk. In some cases collective farm officials tore down the homes and used the lumber for other purposes.[45]

New collective farm households were also required to forfeit their remaining livestock and machinery to collective farm officials as part of the membership process. Although officials sometimes offered to purchase livestock and equipment from collective farm members, they usually required members to move their horses, cattle, pigs, chickens, and geese into the community stalls without remuneration or credit. There were some collectives, however, that permitted members to raise some livestock for their own private use. In a collective near Liebenau (Molotschna), for example, each household was allowed to have one cow, two calves, two pigs, ten sheep or goats, ten beehives, and some poultry.[46] A similar arrangement existed at a collective in the vicinity of Memrik [Selydove], where each family could have one cow, one pig, one sheep, and a few chickens for their private use. Other collective officials, however, were more restrictive with respect to private livestock holdings among collective members. In a collective in the Chortitza colony, only families with children were permitted to have a cow for their own use. Collective farm members who were allowed to keep some livestock for their own personal use were required to enter into contracts with the collective to fulfill milk, meat, or egg quotas and to pay yearly taxes on their animals. To determine whether these quotas were met, collective farm officials kept detailed records of the amount of milk, eggs, or meat which each family was entitled to have per day, as well as how much each family was required to supply to the collective.[47]

Despite having relinquished their land, homes and livestock, collective farm members were still expected to pay taxes. In 1933, for example, a collective farm household that did not receive any income and was not required to pay any other income or agricultural tax was still expected to pay a 5-ruble self-tax assessment. Those households which received monthly incomes were also required to pay self-taxes on a monthly basis; a household earning 75 rubles per month could pay as little as 7 rubles per month in self taxes, while a household earning 275 rubles per month would be required to pay as much as 80 rubles per month.[48]

The cost of membership in a collective farm was not dissimilar to the cost of being dekulakized. The entrance fees, taxes, milk and egg quotas, and surrender of property and livestock to the state were government measures which in reality dekulakized every collectivized Mennonite on an annual basis. These measures also achieved two important results for the Soviet government: they depleted the sources of Mennonite wealth in the countryside and indentured to the state thousands of once independent and self-reliant Mennonite farmers. After being forced to give their money, land, equipment, and livestock to a collective, Mennonites were without the means to support themselves and had to depend on the collective farm to meet many of their basic day-to-day needs. At the same time, however, the ongoing financial commitments that Mennonites had to make to their collectives had mixed results: for some Mennonites their costly investment in the collectives resulted in a keen sense of loyalty and support for the collective farm and the state; for others, however, the required investment incited them to perform acts of sabotage and resistance against the collectives and their administrators.

The Collective Farm Hierarchy

The people who took possession of the new member's land, property, and livestock on behalf of the collective, and who were ultimately responsible for its management and productivity were members of the executive committee of the collective farm. This committee, which usually took directions from the local ECDS and Communist Party cell and which determined day-to-day operations of the collective, could consist of as few as 2 to as many as 25 members, depending on the size of the collective. In the smaller collectives, the executive committee usually consisted of 2 positions -- those of chairman and secretary. On larger collectives the executive often included an accountant, an agronomist, a cultural director, a livestock manager, and a personnel director.[49] Be it a small or large executive committee, the chairman occupied the most challenging position as he was ultimately responsible for the success or failure of the collective. In a number of colonies Mennonites held important positions on collective farm executive committees, including that of collective farm chairman.[50] With time, however, Mennonite participation in these committees was somewhat curtailed when some local officials stipulated that the position of collective chairman be reserved for members of the Communist Party. Although Soviet officials claimed that all collective farm chairmen were elected to their positions by the majority of the members of the collective farm, in reality this was not the case as these members seldom had any say in the actual selection of the chairman and were required to rubber-stamp the Communist Party's recommendation of the appropriate candidate.[51]

One of the most disingenuous tasks of a Mennonite collective farm chairman was convincing his collective members that directives from government agencies and the collective farm executive committee were in the best interest of all. To perpetuate the myth that members had some say in the decision-making process and that the policies of executive committees had overwhelming local peasant support, the chairman convened meetings, often on a weekly basis, for all members of the collective to ratify the policies that the chairman and local government agencies wanted implemented. The meetings, which were usually chaired by the collective chairman or secretary, provided little opportunity for collective members to debate the proposed policies.[52] In Mennonite-populated collectives, the agendas of these meetings included such diverse topics as: the selection of personnel for important positions in the collective hierarchy; the attainment of government objectives for crop-seeding programs and grain quota requirements; the expulsion of certain members for their sabotage/kulak activities; the selection of specific families to receive a piglet, share the milk from a particular collective farm cow, or share a new oil-burning oven; the selection of female members to attend a women's conference; the necessity to speak out against the widespread hunger in Germany and the atrocities of Hitler and his fascists; and the date for the next campaign to rid the collective of field mice and weeds.[53]

Inspiring the members to implement and abide by collective farm polices was another difficult task for the chairman. This was particularly true with respect to meeting grain and meat quotas set for each collective. Promises made by collective farm chairmen to government officials about how much grain or meat their collective farms would supply were rarely kept. When a Mennonite chairman repeatedly broke his promises, it did not take long for government functionaries to blame him for all of the shortcomings of his collective farm and to treat him as a convenient scapegoat for the problems associated with the collectivization process in general. Village newspapers, such as Chortitza's Stürmer, repeatedly accused Mennonite chairmen of being in league with the kulak to subvert the collectivization process and demanded that they be ousted from their position by their collective members. Dismissal from work, loss of possessions, and banishment from a region or province were the usual forms of punishment meted out to collective chairmen who were out of favour with local government authorities.[54]

Unlike the collective farm chairman, who was usually selected by the Communist Party or the ECDS, the other members of the executive -- such as the accountant (or secretary), the agronomist, the livestock manager, the cultural director, and the personnel manager -- were routinely elected from within the collective farm community itself. Mennonites who filled these positions had to meet the approval of the chairman, and in many cases local officials. Because the chairman had to work closely with these executive members, he naturally had a vested interest in having a say as to who was selected.[55] This was especially true with respect to the selection of the accountant, who was responsible for the financial affairs of the collective, and who played an important role in determining how successful the chairman and the collective as a whole would be. Some of the tasks undertaken by the accountant and his staff included recording the minutes and attendance of collective and artel meetings, tallying the hours of work for each collective member, calculating the members' wages and commodity rations, determining how much grain and produce were to be supplied to local officials, and computing the amount of taxes each collective member would have to pay.[56]

The agronomist also played a crucial role in determining the success of a collective farm. Although the agronomist took directions from the chairman and local officials, he or she was chiefly responsible for determining the type of crops to be grown on the collective, when the crops were to be planted, and how much seed was to be sown. The agronomist was also in charge of coordinating the harvest, and in some of the smaller collectives undertook the responsibilities of livestock manager and personnel director.[57] With some collectives employing hundreds of workers and farming thousands of hectares of land, the agronomist and the accountant played indispensable roles in the day-to-day operation of the farms.

Mennonites filled other important administrative positions on the collectives, including acting as the chair of various commissions established by the collective farm executives. Some of these commissions included the revision commission (which dealt with auditing and accounting matters of the collective) and the conflict commission (which handled disputes between members). One of the most influential commissions on the collective was the culture commission, which was responsible for providing political instruction to the collective farm members. The mandate of this commission included monitoring the activities of teachers and their political instruction to their pupils, showing propaganda films on the superiority of the economic and political system of the USSR, stocking the *Roten Ecke* (collective farm reading room) with government-sanctioned reading materials, providing radios for members to hear government radio programs, and supervising children who played games, such as chess and billiards, in the cultural hall.[58]

The brigade leaders -- or "brigadiers" -- also played an important role in managing the collective farms. Taking orders from the chairman, the agronomist, and other members of the executive committee, brigadiers were in charge of specific brigades (such as field, livestock, vegetable, or silkworm brigades) that were assigned particular tasks. The Mennonite brigadiers were usually handpicked by the collective executive whose selection was later rubber-stamped by the other collective farm members. The brigadier assigned daily tasks to each member in his or her group, supervised the members to insure that the work was completed satisfactorily, dealt with workers' complaints and problems, organized fire brigades and nightwatchmen, planned the seeding and harvesting schedules, attended to the cultural and political education of brigade workers, and calculated the number of units of work each member completed on a particular day in order to assess his or her rations and wages.[59] To ensure that the work of the various brigades on the farm was properly coordinated, the brigadiers frequently convened meetings with their workers to discuss work schedules, as well as to discipline those members who failed to live up to community standards. Activist committees were also created to assist the brigadiers with their work and to provide political education to those collective farm workers who did not display fervent enthusiasm when performing their duties.[60]

Brigadiers were also responsible for insuring that members of their brigades faithfully attended all collective farm meetings. It was the job of brigadiers to go from house to house to determine which members were not at the meetings, and if necessary, to threaten the truant members with punishment if they failed to appear at forthcoming meetings. The brigadiers also disciplined collective farm members, especially during harvest when collective farm quotas had to be attained. Brigadiers who failed to perform their tasks to the satisfaction of the collective farm executive were often given a dressing down in local newspapers and punished. In one collective, for instance, a Mennonite brigadier and eight other people were imprisoned when they were accused of committing a minor infraction of the collective farm rules in March of 1931. A year later, another Mennonite was elected to the position of brigadier, despite his reluctance to assume the position because of the likelihood of being punished or imprisoned. The Mennonite eventually took up his new post, however, when the collective executive gave him the ultimatum of either taking the position of brigadier or going to jail.[61] Because the position of brigadier was so unpopular in some collectives, the threat of punishment was sometimes used to compel reluctant Mennonites to become brigadiers.

Perhaps the most influential persons in the collectives were the school teachers. In early 1930 the number of Mennonite teachers working on collectives dropped substantially when the government dismissed Mennonite teachers who refused to renounce their religious faith or join the Communist Party.[62] The mandate of those Mennonite teachers who kept their positions was not only to educate the young in language and mathematical skills, but also to instruct them in Marxist-Leninist theory, to demonstrate the folly of religious faith, to convince them to disclose the identities of unknown kulaks, and to instill in them an unquestioning obedience to government and collective farm authorities. To accomplish this, the teachers established government-sponsored Pioneer and Komsomol organizations within the collectives.[63] The teachers were also required to provide weekly educational and political instruction to the adult members of the collective, participate in various committees in the collective and village soviets, take an active role in the decision-making process of the collective, and attend political seminars and upgrading courses sponsored by government officials and activists. In some cases, the school teachers were also required to perform some manual labour around the collective. One Mennonite teacher reported that aside from his regular teaching duties, he was ordered to manage the library of the collective farm, provide two hours of daily instruction to the illiterate members of the collective, perform daily chores around the collective, and participate as a member of no less than 10 commissions established in the collective. With teachers involved in such a wide variety of influential tasks, authorities usually insisted that teachers be members of the Communist Party as a prerequisite to retaining their positions.[64]

While a small minority of collective farm members -- such as the school teacher, the accountant, and the brigadier -- held administrative positions, the majority of the rank and file members were assigned to more menial, labour-intensive jobs. The more highly rated, non-administrative positions in collective farms included working as a baker, cook, veterinarian, horseman, cowhand, milker, swineherder, poultry keeper, beekeeper, carpenter, machinist, farm machinery operator, sawmill operator, blacksmith, or wheelwright.[65] There was understandably some competition between members to obtain these more specialized positions as they were not as physically demanding and were paid higher wages in comparison to the positions held by field workers or labourers. There were a limited number of these preferable positions on the collectives, however, and were usually reserved for those members who were candidates for or members of the Communist Party, or who had publicly declared themselves to be *Stürmer* (ardent proponents of the government's collectivization program).[66]

The majority of Mennonites on collective farms never obtained one of these more specialized positions, but instead worked as farm hands, toiling in the fields and performing many of the labour-intensive tasks around the collectives. Gardening, plowing, seeding, weeding, harvesting, milling, cleaning silos, and working as nightwatchmen (guarding livestock and farm machinery) were just a few of the tasks performed by the farm hands.[67] Although some of these members participated in various collective farm committees, such as volunteering for the local Red Cross, most were too busy or too tired to become involved in extra-curricular committee work. This was particularly the case for women who not only did much of the field work on the collectives, but also weeded crops and gardens, milked the cows, collected firewood, worked in the kitchens, bakeries, and in some cases mills. Even the elderly and the children were required to perform specific tasks. The older members at a collective near Liebenau (Molotschna), for example, worked as carpenters and gardeners.[68] The children at a collective near Altonau (Sagradowka) worked as ditch diggers after school, while children at a collective near Hierschau (Molotschna) collected sunflower seeds and toiled in the local coal mines and white earth pits. The only members who were not required to perform physically demanding tasks were those were handicapped and had received a physician's report confirming that they were incapable of manual labour. This is not to say, however, that the handicapped did nothing around the collective farms; they were given other tasks, such as babysitting infants or tending the gardens. The executive saw to it that all available manpower was used to keep the collective farm in operation.[69]

What happened to those collective farm members who failed to perform their assigned jobs? Many were quickly made examples of in the village newspapers. In the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies for example, newspaper articles and cartoons routinely castigated Mennonite collective workers for their propensity to sleep on the job, their inability to show up for work on time, their activities of sabotage, thievery, and hooliganism, and their zealous church attendance. To set an example, the newspapers also published the punishments (such as monetary fines, eviction from the collective, or exile) that were meted out to farmhands who failed to do their jobs properly or who participated in anti-Soviet activities against the collective farm community. Frequently the newspapers also included feature articles in the same issue that congratulated Mennonites who had renounced their traditional religious beliefs or who had outperformed other collective farm members in terms of hard work.[70]

Ideally, all members of the collective farm were supposed to perform equal amounts of work with no one particular member working much harder than the others. In reality, however, it was the members of the field brigades who were assigned the most arduous tasks, required to put in the longest hours of work, and paid the least in wages and food rations. Workers in the other brigades, such as the livestock or machinery brigades, also occasionally worked overtime, but their working conditions were usually better than those who toiled in the fields. Often referring to themselves as Soviet slave labourers in their letters to the West, Mennonite field brigade workers were routinely ordered to work at least 10 hours a day during the winter months, and often from sunrise until late at night during the summer and harvest months.[71] They were given occasional holidays (such as the anniversary of the creation of the Red Army in February) in the winter months, but during the sowing and harvest seasons, the members of the field brigade rarely enjoyed a free Sunday or a day of rest (except for state holidays that honoured important events such as the Bolshevik Revolution). They often stayed on the fields for days at a time until all of the field work was completed. This was the case at a collective near Liebenau (Molotschna) and Rosenort (Molotschna) where Mennonites worked on the fields for days at a time, eating and sleeping in special field kitchens and wagons that were constructed for such purposes. In other villages special feeding arrangements were made to ensure that field hands continued to work on the fields for most of the day. Field wagons and unreasonably long work shifts, however, seldom inspired anyone to do any more work than was absolutely necessary.[72]

The Soviet theory of how collective farm workers would interact in their work relationships with others did not resemble reality. In theory, all the members of a collective farm were equal in status, with each member having an equal say in how the collective farm was to operate, and each position in the collective (from milkmaid to collective farm chairman) being of equal importance. In reality, however, this was not the case. Tightly stratified hierarchies dominated collective farms where those in executive positions often dictated to and exploited for their own benefit those in the lower echelons of the hierarchy. In many respects, the collective farms were more hierarchial and dictatorial than what most Mennonite communities were prior to collectivization. There were often only 6 or 7 tiers within a Mennonite community's hierarchal structure prior to collectivization: in descending order they usually included: a) religious and political leaders, b) estate owners and businessmen, c) professionals such as teachers, d) farmers who owned land, e) labourers who did not own land, f) women and children, and g) non-adherents and non-Mennonites. In the collective farm, on the other hand, there could often be 6 or 7 tiers within the hierarchial structure of the collective farm executive alone, not to mention the hierarchical structures that were outside of and subservient to those in the executive committee -- brigadiers, school teachers, specialized farm workers (such as machinists), field labourers, the elderly, and children. For most Mennonites, government claims that all collective farm members were equally important and had an equal say in the operation of their collectives rang hollow.

Notwithstanding the highly structured way in which collective farms were administered, Mennonites often found it easier to migrate through the various tiers of the collective farm hierarchies than through those of pre-collectivized Mennonite communities. Members of Mennonite society who historically had very little say in the administration of their villages, such as women and village poor, were often encouraged to assume positions of authority in the collective farms. The collective farm provided these elements in Mennonite society with more opportunities to improve their role and status in society than had been offered under the previous Mennonite hierarchy. This is not to say, however, that collectivized Mennonites were always presented with such opportunities or took advantage of them; many did not desire or were not permitted to move up within the hierarchal structures of the collectives.

Giving Unto Caesar What is Not Caesar's

The goal of most collective farms was to produce as much grain and livestock as humanly possible in order to meet government production quotas and to feed their members. High expectations from collective farm chairmen, local soviets, and government agencies made it clear that they were counting on bumper crops becoming the norm. In reality, however, this was seldom the case as crop yields of collective farms varied significantly from region to region; although some farms witnessed occasional bumper crops, most experienced less than satisfactory harvests or repeated crop failures. In 1930, for instance, some village collectives in the Chortitza area reported better than average crops, harvesting 55 poods per dessiatine for wheat, 50 poods per dessiatine for rye, and 40 poods per dessiatine for barley. More spectacular yields were reported in the Felsenbach (Borozenko [Kamianka]) area where some collectives harvested between 100 and 130 poods of grain per hectare.[73] At other collectives, however, the harvest yields were not as impressive. In the Ohrloff (Molotschna) area, for example, collectives produced average or below average crop yields in 1930: 5,250 poods of grain were harvested at the Ohrloff collective, 4,701 poods at the Tiege village collective, 2,000 poods at the *Kultura* collective, 12,750 poods at the *Soglasie* collective, and 17,500 poods at the *Radstei* collective. On other farms in the Molotschna region late frost destroyed much of the winter wheat in the early spring, while storms and drought conditions hampered the growth of spring wheat and other cereal grains in the late spring and early summer. Complete crop failures were a common phenomenon at a number of the collective farms in the Crimea. Crimean Mennonites complained that the spring cereal crops in their regions failed to germinate, and they predicted widespread shortages of bread and fodder for the area for the following fall and winter.[74]

What exacerbated these grain shortages was the manner in which collective farms harvested and stored their grain crops. A common sight at many collectives in Ukraine and the Crimea were large tracts of uncut wheat lying under snow or large mounds of unprotected grain rotting in the fields. In the Sagradowka region, for instance, it was reported that thousands of hectares of snow-covered grain had still not been harvested by mid-November 1930. Large amounts of rotten grain that were left too long in fields in the Molotschna region could only be used as cattle feed. At other collectives, huge piles of unprotected grain rotted and had to be dumped into nearby lakes and rivers. The huge waste of grain that resulted from inefficient harvesting techniques and insufficient crop storage facilities made it difficult for many collectives to provide enough food for their members, let alone meet government targets.[75]

As in 1930, the crop yields of collective farms varied significantly from region to region in 1931. With a few exceptions, the collective farms in the Molotschna colony witnessed above-average crop yields as weather conditions in 1931 proved to be more favourable than in 1930. In Ohrloff (Molotschna), for instance, Mennonite residents concluded that the 1931 harvest was the best since the Russian Revolution. There were also very good harvests in the Friedensfeld (Borozenko [Kamianka]) region, the Woronesh area, and in the vicinity of Memrik [Selydove]. Relatively high harvest yields at more than 50 poods per hectare were also recorded in some regions in the Crimea -- a complete turn of events in comparison to the crop failures of 1930.[76] In the Sagradowka, Chortitza, and Yazykovo [Lukashivka] colonies, however, the crops did not fare as well. Late seeding in the fall of 1930, combined with a severe frost in the spring of 1931, destroyed over 50 percent of winter wheat crops at a number of collectives in the Sagradowka area; in many cases the frozen winter wheat could only be used as fertilizer and had to be plowed under. Low quality seed, unfavourable weather conditions, and inefficient harvesting techniques also insured relatively low crop yields in the Chortitza and Yazykovo [Lukashivka] colonies. High spring flood waters from the Dnieper River affected many winter wheat crops in the region adversely, and only a few collectives, such as Osterwick, averaged respectable winter wheat crop yields of 20 centners per hectare.[77] Ironically, summer drought conditions in the colony dried up many grain fields that were seeded after the flood waters receded. While a few wheat fields surrounding Osterwick produced bumper crop yields (24 double centners per hectare), other villages in the colonies recorded less than average wheat yields. In Adelsheim and Chortitza, the average wheat yield stood at 12 double centners per hectare, while in Schöneberg and Blumengart the average yield was between 8 and 9 double centners. The villages of Franzfeld, Hochfeld, Kronsweide, and Neuenberg each tallied wheat yields at 8 double centners per hectare, while Burwalde, Neuendorf, and Neuhorst each averaged between 6.7 and 7 double centners of wheat per hectare. One village in the Chortitza colony, Rosengart, saw wheat yields bottoming out at 4 double centners per hectare.[78]

While weather conditions played a significant role in determining the wheat yields for 1931, man-made factors also contributed to lower yields throughout Ukraine and the Crimea. As in 1930, a significant number of collectives witnessed widespread spoilage of cereal and vegetable crops in 1931 due to late harvesting and improper crop storage practices. In the Molotschna colony, for example, some collectives had not even finished harvesting their crops by Christmas of 1931.[79] Such widespread mismanagement practices drastically reduced whatever excess grain collective farm members could expect to receive for their food rations.

While collectives across Ukraine and the Crimea witnessed a mixture of both bumper crops and crop failures in 1930 and 1931, this was not the case in 1932. Below-average crop yields and total crop failures were widespread, affecting nearly all of the areas populated by Ukrainian and Crimean Mennonites in 1932. Spring flooding, for instance, impeded the crop development of some winter wheat fields in the Molotschna region. The spring cereal crops did not fare very well either, with some areas harvesting between 1.5 and 4 poods of wheat per hectare. Much the same could be said of the crops harvested in the Crimea and near the villages of Margenau (Molotschna), Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), and Nikolaievka (Ignatievo [Dzerzhyns'ke]) in Ukraine. In the Nikolaifeld region, for example, improper cultivation and seeding practices combined with an overabundance of rain resulted in a significant shortfall of harvested cereal crops. The agricultural state of affairs in Nikolaievka was also much worse after hail and rain storms destroyed almost all of the crops.[80] Gloomy crop reports were also the order of the day in collectives in the Chortitza and Yazykovo [Lukashivka] colonies. While it is true that average and above-average wheat crop yields occurred in Blumengart (16 double centners per hectare), Osterwick (11 double centners per hectare), Kronstal (8 double centners per hectare), Kronsweide (7.5 double centners per hectare), Adelsheim (6 double centners per hectare), and Schöneberg (6 double centners per hectare), the wheat yields in other villages plummeted to record lows. The crop failures were due primarily to shortages of seed, improperly cultivated fields, and the crop destruction caused by the Hessen fly. Yields for wheat in Einlage were as low as 4.2 double centners per hectare, while the average wheat yields in Franzfeld, Hochfeld, and Schönhorst dropped to a mere 4 double centners per hectare. Even lower yields of between 2.3 and 3 double centners per hectare were recorded in Burwalde, Chortitza, Neuenberg, Rosengart, Neuenhof, and Neuhorst. The continuing practice of employing unsound farming, harvesting, and grain-storage techniques, which by 1932 had become trademarks of many collective farms, only reduced the already pathetically low yields. The result was a severe shortage of grain seed that could be earmarked for the 1933 crop.[81] The desperate state of affairs continued throughout the summer and fall of 1932, giving Mennonites every reason to worry about their food supplies for the forthcoming winter.

For collectivized families who endured the winter of 1932-1933, the harvest of 1933 gave them reason to believe that they might survive another winter. While some areas in the Molotschna region realized low yields for winter wheat crops in 1933, the summer cereal crops fared relatively well in a number of regions of Ukraine and the Crimea. Average or better-than-average cereal crop yields were commonplace in the Chortitza and Yazykovo [Lukashivka] colonies; some Mennonites reported that their wheat crops grew as high as 5 or 6 feet, and in a few areas, the rye crops were as tall as mounted riders on horseback. The average wheat yield in the Hochfeld area was 10 double centners per hectare, while in Adelsheim and Franzfeld the yield reached 11.[82] Comparatively high crop yields ranging between 12 and 13 double centners of wheat per hectare were the norm in Chortitza, Kronstal, Kronsweide, Neuendorf, Neuhorst, Osterwick, and Schönhorst. Record or near-record yields were also reported in Neuenberg and Rosengart, where the wheat crops averaged 15 double centners per hectare, and in Burwalde and Schöneberg, which saw the average yield range between 17 and 18 double centners per hectare. With crop yields rebounding to normal and above-normal levels in the fall of 1933, it was expected that fewer people would suffer from hunger and starvation than in the previous year.[83]

It was not so much the weather as the policies of the local and central governments that determined how successful the crop production was in Mennonite-populated regions between 1930 and 1934. Ignoring the basic principles of crop development, storage, and transport, officials in the local and central governments implemented decisions which often made no agricultural sense and which collectively did more to retard Mennonite agriculture than any previous catastrophic event, including the Civil War and the famine of 1921-1923. Experienced Mennonite farmers found it impossible to diminish the damaging repercussions of such policies. Those who challenged the wisdom of the collective farm executive committee on matters involving agriculture were characterized as saboteurs and kulaks.

A lion's share of the grain produced by collectives between and 1930 and 1933 was delivered to the state to meet government-imposed grain quotas. Among 5 collective farms in and around Ohrloff and Tiege (Molotschna), for instance, over 35,000 poods of the 51,709 poods of grain produced by collectives were delivered to the government in the fall of 1930. Collectivized Mennonites in the Crimea and the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies complained that the government rarely adjusted its forced requisitions of grain to reflect fluctuations in the annual crop yields of the collectives. As a result, collective farm members forfeited a large part, and in some cases all of their hard-earned wages and rations, in order for the collectives to meet their quotas. In many Mennonite-populated regions, the government quota of grain in 1930 ranged from 9 poods of grain per person to as high as 20 poods of grain per person.[84]

High government quotas for grain and food commodities were also commonplace in 1931. Suspicious of collectivized peasants, government functionaries routinely demanded that grain from collective threshing machines be delivered directly to government storage sites. This was the experience of Mennonites at an 111-member collective near Spat (Crimea [Oktiabrs'ke]) that farmed 104 hectares of winter wheat. After the collective harvested approximately 5,200 poods of winter wheat in the early summer of 1931, it was ordered to deliver 4,000 poods of wheat to the government storage areas. Of the 1,200 poods that remained, approximately 1,000 poods were set aside as seed for next year's crop and the remaining 200 poods of wheat were divided among the members of the collective as food rations.[85] Crop yields sometimes exceeded the high government quotas, however, such as in the villages of Blumenort (Molotschna), Tiege (Molotschna), and Rosenort (Molotschna), where collective farms were recognized for surpassing their quotas by as much as 129%. Conversely, collectives at Ohrloff (Molotschna) and Reinfeld (Molotschna) found the quotas impossible to fill, and in some cases delivered as little as 28% of the grain required of them.[86]

When there were shortages in the amount of grain that was ordered to be delivered to the state, collective farm members surrendered their wages and food rations to government officials, usually under the threat of exile, to try to make up the deficits. At Friedensruhe (Molotschna), for example, the *Stern* collective was only able to deliver 4,000 poods of grain to the state, falling far short of the government quota of 24,000 poods of wheat, 600 poods of rye, 500 poods of sunflower seeds, and 90 poods of pumpkin seeds; members were threatened with punishment if they failed to provide enough grain from their own reserves to make up the shortfall. At another collective that witnessed 2 consecutive years of very poor harvests, the members were required to supply 2,000 poods of grain in a 3-day period; some of the members fled the collective after they were told that they would be arrested and sentenced to one year of hard labour if they failed to attain the quota.[87] The threat of arrest also hung over the heads of collectivized Mennonites near Chortitza who were required to fulfill a 480-pood meat quota and who, together with members from the Rosengart and Rosental collectives, were required to provide 3,000 poods of grain to the state. In order to fulfill the meat requisition, member households were ordered to give their only cow to the authorities. They were also forced to dip into their own private reserves to meet the grain quota, but they fell short and collected only 150 poods.[88] At collectives where private reserves of grain could not make up the deficits, members often rethreshed the straw in an effort to obtain the additional grain for the state. The problem with this approach, however, was that motorized threshing machines were in short supply on many collective farms, and so members had to use more time-consuming methods, such as threshing with a stone or flail, to acquire additional grain. This was the experience of Mennonites from a collective near Lichtenau (Molotschna), who manually rethreshed 3 cartloads of straw and retrieved a mere 15 pounds of grain.[89] When grain quota deficits amounted to thousands of poods, rethreshing straw seldom produced enough grain to satisfy government demands.

Government grain requisitions became even more burdensome in 1932. In the summer of 1932, directives from the local ECDS were circulated to village soviets that increased previous grain and meat quotas, complained about the failure of village collectives to meet their respective quotas for grain and meat, and threatened to punish those who failed to provide enough food for the nation's industrial workers. For collective farm members, these new demands were frequently impossible to meet. At a collective near Rosenort (Molotschna), for instance, members were required to supply 3,054 poods of grain for the month of July alone -- an order which members knew they could never fill. The levies at other collectives were even higher, resulting in members having to surrender all they had to the state. Inhabitants at one village collective were ordered to supply 18,000 poods of grain, despite the fact that the collective had only harvested one tenth of what the government demanded.[90] At another collective near Alexanderkrone (Sagradowka), the members of a Mennonite family were ordered to deliver all 31 poods of the corn they had received as rations for their work; they were also required to deliver an amount of corn equal to that which they had already consumed. Similar demands were placed on members belonging to another collective farm. After receiving 104 kilograms of corn, 60 kilograms of wheat, 18 kilograms of barley, and 16 kilograms of rye as wages for their work on the collective, Mennonite members were ordered to deliver 326 kilograms of grain products and additional garden produce after the collective failed to meet its government quotas. At the same time, any worker who had his own garden was required to surrender produce in order to meet additional quotas assessed on the collective. With government officials demanding every kilogram of grain, it did not take long for desperate food shortages to arise in various regions of Ukraine and the Crimea by the early months of 1932.[91]

Notwithstanding the hunger and starvation that afflicted some Mennonite-populated areas in 1932, the government continued to impose unrealistic grain and food quotas on collective farms in 1933. Village collectives, such as Blumenstein (Molotschna), Münsterberg (Molotschna), Lichtenau (Molotschna), and Altonau (Molotschna), found it impossible to meet 75%, let alone 100% of their grain quotas in late 1932 and early 1933. At collectives near Klippenfeld (Molotschna) and Friedensfeld (Borozenko [Kamianka]) Mennonites complained that government officials expropriated all grain and food products that the collective had produced during the year and demanded that inhabitants rethresh the chaff in order to insure that no extra grain was left for them.[92] Collective farms that repeatedly failed to satisfy government demands were usually penalized with additional quotas. In Münsterberg (Molotschna), for instance, the village soviet fined a number of Mennonites 10 rubles for every kilogram of meat that they failed to supply to the collective. At another village, each collectivized household was initially ordered to deliver 17 kilograms of meat during the course of a year, regardless of whether or not the households had any livestock. A short time later, officials demanded that each household provide an additional 4 kilograms of meat; those households that failed to meet this quota were ordered to deliver 21 kilograms of meat to officials immediately.[93] By 1933 the attempt to satisfy government demands for grain and meat became a Sisyphean task for a large number of collectivized Mennonites.

The economic burdens associated with grain and meat quotas were exacerbated by the government demands on collective farms to make monetary contributions to various credit, seed, and grain associations sponsored by the government. In the Chortitza-Yazykovo region, for instance, the ECDS put pressure on local collectives to provide money and inventory to credit organizations that provided financial assistance to the CVP. The collectives were required to invest land, seed, and money in various government-sponsored enterprises, such as *Neighbourhood Grain Cooperative* and *Ploughman Credit Association*, which carried out their own crop-production and financial-assistance programs intended to benefit all collectives in particular region. Other collectivized Mennonites were required to join livestock, dairy, and cattle-breeding associations, such as *Milk* in Chortitza, which monitored the collectivization of local livestock, directed livestock-breeding and castration programs, and advised local peasants on animal husbandry.[94] Despite their significant contributions to these associations, collective farms rarely saw any return on their investment.

The grain quotas, meat requisitions, penalties, and annual levies for members of credit association were a few of the measures that government routinely used to dekulakize the collective farms in the early 1930s. The impact of these initiatives on collectivized

Mennonites was often no different than dekulakization measures imposed against Mennonite kulaks and experts: government officials confiscated most of the wages and food rations that collective farm members had earned, leaving many of these members in desperate circumstances. This ongoing dekulakization of collectivized Mennonites also had a profound impact on how they viewed Soviet collectivization: Mennonites likened life on the collective farm to internal exile and often questioned whether their lives were any better than those of Mennonites sent to the kulak settlements or camps.

Machine Tractor Stations and the Use of Mennonite Machinery and Livestock

Collectivized Mennonites also saw very little return on the significant investment of agricultural machinery that they involuntarily made to the collective farm program. Farm machinery that was initially confiscated from Mennonite farmers was often mismanaged and inoperable soon after it was placed in the hands of government officials who transferred it to the local Machine Tractor Stations (MTS) established in late 1929 and early 1930. The mandate of the MTS included acquiring, managing, repairing, and operating the nation's agricultural machinery and tractors for the benefit of collective farms. Much of the machinery that formed the inventory of the MTS initially belonged to individual farmers and independently-organized tractor associations. Some of these associations in Mennonite-populated regions, such as the *Friendship* Machine-Tractor Cooperative in Ohrloff (Molotschna) and the *Energy* and *Grain* Associations in Chortitza, were organized by Mennonites in the late 1920s, had Mennonites on their executive committees, and allowed non-collectivized farmers to join as members.[95] By the end of 1929 and by early 1930, however, government officials who were called upon to centralize the nation's agricultural equipment put pressure on these associations and farmers to surrender their agricultural machinery and tractors to the nearest newly created MTS. Local collectives were subsequently required to enter into contracts with the MTS if they wanted the MTS to use the machinery on their farms. Before any contract was signed and sealed, however, the MTS required detailed information on the amount of land and number of households within the collective, as well as the social status of its members (i.e. how many members were poor peasants, labourers, and middle peasants). To encourage collective farms to sign on, the MTS promised that only it could ensure that the collectives would be able to attain all government grain quotas. This was the case in Rosenort (Molotschna), where the village collective entered into a long-term contract with the local MTS after MTS officials guaranteed that they would assist the collective in over fulfilling its government grain quotas.[96]

The intimate involvement of local Communist Party cells in the administration of the newly established MTS facilitated MTS hegemony in directing the agricultural and political affairs of the Mennonite countryside. The Communist Party also recruited new party members from those who worked for the MTS in order to train "agents of political control over the peasantry" who could be used by the Communist Party to implement government policies in the collective farms and rural areas. There were Mennonites who were enlisted as "agents" after they were recruited from local collective farms to work at the MTS as mechanics and machinery operators and subsequently became Communist Party members or candidates. There were also Mennonites who obtained executive positions (chairman or accountant) in the MTS and played an important role in determining the success or failure of collective farms within their respective jurisdictions.[97]

Although one of the original purposes of the MTS was to provide tractor service to the collective farms in the most efficient manner possible, inherent problems with the operation, location, and management of many MTS's prevented them from accomplishing this objective. Some of the most common problems are listed in the protocols of meetings of the *Friendship* MTS in Ohrloff (Molotschna). The protocols detail such diverse matters as the election of Mennonites to executive posts in the *Friendship* MTS, the complaints of local collectives regarding the operating schedules and costs of the MTS to plow fields and harvest crops, and the undue special attention that the MTS gave to some collectives in providing service. The protocols also highlighted the ongoing funding and machinery shortages that made it impossible for *Friendship* MTS officials to meet the demands of local collective farms.[98] In some areas, such as Waldheim (Molotschna), the local MTS was viewed with contempt by the collective farms. After it established itself in the agricultural machine factory of I. I. Neufeld and Co., the Waldheim MTS commandeered much of the agricultural machinery, including seeding machines, plows, and combines, that belonged to the nearby collectives and individual farmers. As a result, collective farms in the region were almost entirely dependent upon the Waldheim MTS to seed and harvest their crops. They were also required to make large monetary contributions to the local MTS for the use of its machinery and to support its school for training tractor operators. In some cases, collectives were ordered to surrender as much as 25% of their harvest to the MTS for services that it provided. In other cases, the collective farm was required to pay the MTS a fee for each service performed on its behalf. The MTS in Halbstadt (Molotschna), for instance, circulated price lists to local collectives for the various services that it provided; it also rendered invoices and reminder letters to those collectives which failed to provide adequate contributions to the MTS or pay for services already performed. It was also not uncommon for collective farms to be ordered to provide inventories of machinery and lists of trained personnel who could operate and repair the machinery should the local MTS call upon them to provide voluntary services.[99]

Despite the enormous financial, equipment, and manpower contributions of collective farms to MTS operations, local MTS officials did not take their directions from collective farm authorities, but rather from Communist Party and government officials. Moreover, it was MTS, and not collective farm officials who arbitrarily decided which collectives were to have their fields plowed, seeded, and harvested first. During the harvest in the Friedensruhe (Molotschna) region, for example, all of the available threshing machines at the local MTS would first thresh the grain at *Stern* collective (one of the largest in the area) before they began work at other collectives. By frequently making seeding and harvesting decisions based on political factors or the prestige and size of a collective rather than sound agricultural practices, MTS officials made costly errors that resulted in the unnecessary loss of thousands of poods of grain.[100]

On occasion, the costly errors of Mennonite MTS officials were the subject of public scrutiny and accountability when local newspapers published details of their decisions and actions. In the Chortitza and Yazykovo colonies, for example, the alleged antics and slothfulness of Mennonite tractor operators from the local MTS were ridiculed and cartooned in Stürmer. This newspaper repeatedly called for the resignation and expulsion of MTS officials for their acts of misconduct.[101] Regardless of the bad press that they regularly received, MTS officials were often protected by the Communist Party and they continued to exert a powerful influence in determining the agricultural success or failure of collective farms in the Mennonite countryside.

Not all confiscated Mennonite farm machinery and tractors were transferred to the MTS. Collective farms were permitted to retain or purchase some agricultural equipment. All too often, however, this machinery was inoperable, as collective farms were notorious for mismanaging their agricultural equipment. Mennonites frequently complained that there was an usually high number of broken-down wagons, plows, harrows, threshing machines, and tractors on collective farms. Such was the case at collective farms in the Ohrloff (Molotschna) and Blumenort (Molotschna) areas, which had persistent problems with farm machinery in need of repair; officials from the local village soviet routinely blamed the machinery problems on the ever-present lack of work discipline among collective farm members.[102] At another collective farm in Ukraine more than two thirds of the wagons were in continual disrepair, apparently because members seldom protected the machinery from inclement weather. Rain and snow also severely damaged the wooden-spoked wheels of machinery at a collective near Liebenau (Molotschna); the continuous swelling and drying of the wooden spokes caused them to crack and break, thus rendering the machinery unusable. Misuse and irresponsibility were other commonly cited reasons why tractors sat idle for months at a time. Sometimes collective farm personnel tried to repair the machinery themselves, but usually the damage was so significant that specialized mechanics from other areas were called upon to solve the problem. Because of ongoing mismanagement and abuse of farm machinery, unharvested crops rotting in the fields or lying under the snow were familiar sights on collective farms.[103]

When their own agricultural machinery broke down and tractors from the MTS were unavailable, collective farms had to rely on horses and cattle to perform much of their field work. Despite government promises that the MTS tractor would replace the horse as the new symbol of the nation's progressive approach to agriculture, collective farms continued to depend upon livestock to perform much of the field work. Although collectives received expropriated livestock from dekulakized and collectivized farmers in 1930, they often did not have adequate herds of horses and cattle to plough and harvest the fields. This was the case at collectives such as Ohrloff (Molotschna), Gnadenfeld (Molotschna), Neuenberg (Chortitza), and Liebenau (Molotschna) where disease and fodder shortages decimated the horse and cattle populations in 1930. In some regions the number of cattle was reduced to one tenth of the original populations resulting in the closure of a number of collective farm dairies.[104]

In 1931 and 1932, the growing shortages of fodder, escalating government meat quotas, and increasing incidence of illegal slaughter of livestock further reduced the number of livestock at Mennonite-populated collectives. During this time, collective farm officials found it increasingly difficult to maintain and acquire horse and cattle herds for working the land. The number of horses in some villages, such as Liebenau (Molotschna), had decreased by 50%. The loss of livestock was even higher in other villages. The village of Einlage (Chortitza), for instance, nearly had its entire horse population wiped out when its herd of 400 horses in 1931 was reduced to 34 horses between 1931 and 1932.[105] During the winter of 1932-1933, the growing shortage of livestock fodder and widespread slaughter of livestock by starving peasants only multiplied the already high death rate of collectivized livestock herds. One report from the Chortitza region made it clear that most of the dwindling herds of horses in the area had starved during the winter, and those horses that did survive were far too weak to pull the mowers and binders used for harvesting. Another report from the Sagradowka region pointed out that in the fall of 1933 cattle in the region were regularly used to haul grain away from the fields because there were too few horses that survived the previous year. Such scenes were not uncommon, and many collectives farms found it next to impossible to harvest and seed the winter wheat in the autumn of 1933.[106] With the majority of collectives dependent upon working livestock herds for their daily operations, yearly reductions in those herds between 1930 and 1933 had long-lasting and detrimental effects on the future economic and agricultural success of the collective farms.

The MTS executive exerted enormous political power in the Mennonite countryside and competed with other Soviet agencies such as the ECDS for political supremacy. Often disorganized yet intensely bureaucratic, the local MTS implemented politically motivated policies and decisions on agricultural issues that ultimately resulted in significant reductions in the crop production of collective farms populated by Mennonites. Although Mennonites initially saw some benefit in organizing tractor associations and helped to organize them in 1928, there was very little enthusiastic Mennonite support for the MTS by 1930. In fact, most collectivized Mennonites came to view the MTS as a liability rather than a benefit: the policies and programs of the MTS sabotaged the crop production potential of Mennonite collective farms on an almost annual basis. For the minority of Mennonites who actually benefited from the MTS, it was usually because it provided them with better paying jobs than could be found on the collective or an opportunity to move up the ranks of the government bureaucracy and the Communist Party.

The incompetence of the MTS forced collectivized Mennonites to rely on their own means to sow and harvest their crops. Their dependence on horses and cattle to perform field work increased between 1930 and 1933, despite the substantial reduction in their herd populations over the same period. In these circumstances, the Soviet government forced collectivized Mennonites to revert to agricultural practices that had not been used for several decades. In this respect, Soviet collectivization and the MTS did not modernize the Mennonite countryside; rather, they compelled collectivized Mennonites to implement agricultural practices that were out of date and inefficient.

Sharing the Workload

Who did the work on the collective farms? On some collectives, the rules stipulated that only men between 18 and 50 years of age and women between 18 and 45 years of age were required to work. In reality, however, Mennonite men and women of all ages, including the elderly and the infirm, as well as many children were required to work. For a Mennonite man, the work regimen often proved to be more structured and limiting than when he previously worked as his own boss on his own farming operation. On his own farm a Mennonite man did almost every job that had to be done, whereas on a collective he was assigned very specific tasks which he performed on a daily basis for most of the year (e.g. worked as a cowherder, accountant, or carpenter). This created an "assembly line approach" to farming where there was little opportunity for a man to perform a variety of tasks. In such an environment, boredom was commonplace and there was little incentive for men to work as hard on the collectives as they had on their own farm operations.[107]

In collectivized Mennonite households it was the women who often worked the hardest. This was because the majority of Mennonite women worked in the field, performing such back-breaking tasks as plowing, weeding, and picking rocks, while undertaking all of the domestic duties around the home, jobs which few men volunteered to do during their time off. Rising in the morning before any other family members, the woman of the household often prepared breakfast for her family, milked the cow, fed the livestock, and brought the children to the nursery or school. She then worked in the fields or at some other job until evening, brought the children home from the nursery or school, prepared supper for her family, and then cleaned the house, washed the laundry, or tended to her garden plot. If a woman had any spare time, she usually spent it sewing and mending clothes or preparing food for the winter months.[108] Women were also required to work a specific number of "work days" per year (usually around 200 but sometimes as few as 80) on behalf of their collective farm. Those women whose husbands or fathers were exiled or in the alternate military service programs often worked additional days in order to obtain extra food for their children. Women were also required to perform additional tasks for the collective without pay. In the spring of 1933, for example, the executive committee of the Rosenort (Molotschna) collective farm unilaterally decided that the serious weed problem on the collective required all female members of the farm to pull weeds from the gardens until the problem was resolved; those women who refused to pull weeds not only were denied milk, meat, and other products from the collective, but also saw deductions from their regular wages.[109]

There were occasions, albeit very few, when Mennonite women enjoyed some temporary relief from their domestic tasks and physically demanding work duties on the collective farm. One such occasion was when a woman was invited to participate in a commission, such as the village soviet or the CVP. Mennonite women who worked in these commissions played an important role in community life, making decisions on issues that ranged from characterizing fellow Mennonites as kulaks to determining how much milk each collective farm child should receive per day. There were also other occasions when a Mennonite woman would be given some reprieve from her regular duties. When a woman was pregnant, for example, she was usually allowed to be absent from work for three months before and after the birth of her child.[110] A woman might also be given a day off if she was selected by the collective to attend a women's conference. These conferences, which routinely took place in the Chortitza and Molotschna areas, addressed such diverse topics as the following: caring for poultry and cattle, selecting proper workers for the kindergarten, building an infirmary for sick children, doing Communist Party work in the collective farm, selecting tasks for the women's brigade, meeting the objectives of the 5-Year Plan in less than 5 years, assisting the local MTS, dealing with unproductive housework, determining the minimum daily requirements of milk for each child, building showers for collective farm members, and implementing Comrade Kaganovich's directives on improving work discipline in the collectives.[111]

For the majority of women, however, the only officially recognized annual day of rest from collective farm work occurred on March 8th when the nation honoured its womenfolk, and particularly the mothers. On this holiday local officials gave laudatory speeches praising the work of their women and their contributions to the development of collective farms and the country as a whole. On March 8, 1930, for example, collective farm officials in the village of Rosenort (Molotschna) praised the accomplishments of Soviet women and discussed how significantly more progressive Soviet women were when compared with women living in the West: according to these officials, Soviet women had kindergartens and nursery schools which freed them from some of their child rearing responsibilities, while women in the West still struggled to obtain their basic rights. To show their appreciation, village officials sometimes provided the women with additional flour and a lunch buffet in their honour.[112]

The glowing speeches and the temporary respite from work, however, did little to ease the work load of collectivized Mennonite women who were required to work long hours but were often paid less than men for their contributions to the collective farms.

Even women who were senior citizens were expected to work. Women and men who were officially "retired" or who were categorized as "invalids" of work, the Imperialistic War, the Civil War, or the Red Army were expected to perform various tasks such as looking after children, tending the family vegetable plots, or performing small chores around the collectives (e.g. making communal meals or washing clothes) while the younger members worked in the fields. In some cases, the retirees and invalids received pensions. In the Molotschna and Chortitza colonies, Mennonite retirees and invalids received regular pensions averaging between 5 and 6 rubles per month from government organizations such as the *Sobez* and the *Regional Cooperative Association*; in some communities it was up to Mennonite officials to determine who received a pension.[113] Those who qualified for state support usually found the pensions to be wholly inadequate and had to rely on the generosity of family and other collective farm members to supplement their pensions. To save on costs, Mennonite retirees and invalids often lived with their children or extended family in already overcrowded accommodations on the collectives. On some collectives, however, old-age homes, homes for invalids, hospitals, and hostels were established for those who had no accommodation. In the Ohrloff (Molotschna) collective, for example, there were 30 inhabitants, almost all of whom were Mennonite, living in the local old-age home in December of 1930. Residents of these institutions were routinely required to forward all of their pensions to the institutions to offset the cost of their lodging and food.[114]

If seniors or any other members of the collective farm had some leisure time, one could be certain that their recreational activities were closely monitored by the government. Collective farm members were expected to devote their leisure time to participating in state-sponsored activities held in reading rooms and clubs (often referred to as the *Roten Ecke* and *Bauernheim* in Mennonite-populated collectives). These facilities, which were often in former churches and kulak residences, were used as venues for state-sponsored programs, including classes in political instruction, lectures on the Red Army and defending the homeland, government propaganda movies, lotteries, and radio and musical programs.[115] These activities were organized by members of *Bauernheim*, a collective farm association, which organized reading, political, musical, agricultural, atheistic, and drama circles. This association encouraged collective farm workers to read the latest proletarian works on collectivization programs, discuss recent political developments in Soviet newspapers, examine the "ABC's of Leninism," sing socialist anthems, implement anti-religious programs to counteract local religious fervour, and present socialist dramas such as *The Father of the Commissars* and *Satan*. Receiving financial support with monies collected from the self-tax, local *Bauernheims* in village collectives such as Blumengart, Neuendorf, and Einlage (Chortitza) included Mennonite members who participated in the political and anti-religious programs to varying degrees.[116]

The establishment of the *Roten Ecke* and *Bauernheim* in collectives was intended to motivate all members to work for the good of the state and to support its policies. The reality was that almost all able-bodied persons, whether they were Mennonite men, women, children, or the elderly, had to work if they belonged to the collective, regardless of whether or not they were motivated.

This was particularly true for Mennonite women, who performed a large share of the manual labour on the collectives and certainly much more than they had in the pre-collectivized Mennonite settlements. Collectivization was not an entirely negative experience for every Mennonite woman, however. The collective farm provided some Mennonite women with opportunities to become more involved in political and social affairs. Mennonite women attended Soviet-sponsored conferences, were elected or appointed to the executive committees of influential government agencies (such as the village and district soviets and the CVP), and obtained influential positions on the collective farm executive. Their participation in civic affairs and secular government institutions during collectivization is unprecedented. This is not to say, however, that collectivization liberated Mennonite women or improved their lives; on the contrary, most collectivized women found that their lives were more difficult and tedious than ever before. Nevertheless, the widespread increase of Mennonite women who participated in government and collective farm administrative bodies forced Mennonite men to reevaluate what roles their womenfolk would play in their future.

The Fruits of Their Labour

In determining what remuneration a collective farm member received, the government implemented a rather complicated system of categorizing work tasks and ascertaining how much work each member on a farm performed in one day. Under this system members were categorized according to their age and members in each age group were required to complete a specific number of predetermined work units in an average "workday" (typically a 10-hour work shift). Various work tasks on the collectives were also categorized, and each category of tasks was given a specific number of work units which was determined by the degree of difficulty and the level of expertise required to complete the specific category of tasks. At some Mennonite-populated collectives in the Crimea and Ukraine, for example, the inhabitants were divided into the following categories: 1) children up to 14 years of age, 2) adolescents between 14 and 18 years of age, and 3) adults who were 18 years of age and older. In a 10-hour day, workers in the various categories were required to earn the following number of work units in order to obtain their daily wage and rations: children in category 1 were required to earn 1 work unit, adolescents in category 2 needed to obtain 1.5 work units, and adults in category 3 had to earn at least 2 work units.[117]

How each task was categorized was determined by the collective farm executive, and often differed from farm to farm. At a collective near Friedensruhe (Molotschna), for instance, the executive designated each task with a category ranging from category-1 tasks which received the lowest number of work units to category-4 tasks which received the highest. Category-1 tasks, for example, included working behind a cultivator or hauling the straw net from the threshing machine to the straw bin, while category-2 tasks included bringing wagons to the machines or plowing fields. Looking after livestock or milking the cows were included in category-3 tasks, while carpentry work, blacksmithing, machinist work, or loading wagons were listed under category-4 tasks. The number of work units ascribed to each category of tasks was also determined by each collective farm executive. Executive members at the Liebenau (Molotschna) collective, for instance, categorized various tasks in the following manner: hauling and unloading chaff from the threshing machine was equivalent to 0.4 work units per trip (an average person made 4 trips per day which was equivalent to 1.6 work units); digging and shovelling 4 cubic metres of dirt amounted to 1.75 work units; making the round trip to Tokmak (12 to 15 kilometres from Liebenau) to pick up supplies or deliver goods was equivalent to 1.25 work units; cleaning the brigade yard earned 0.75 work units; harrowing 4 hectares (the average amount that could be done in a 10-hour shift) was equivalent to 1.75 work units; and riding the horse pulling the harrow (which was usually done by young boys) earned 0.75 work units. A Liebenau blacksmith, however, often earned over 2 work units for a day's work and approximately 600 work units per year. A similar system of tallying work units was used at a collective near Lichtenau (Molotschna), where category-1 tasks were equivalent to 0.75 work units, category-2 jobs 1.0 work units, category-3 tasks 1.25 work units, and category-4 jobs 1.5 work units.[118]

Collective farm executives also provided incentives and rewards to members who worked overtime. If a member completed more than the required number of work units for a given 10-hour shift, the value of work units for each additional task that he or she performed was doubled; that is, a task equal to 0.4 work units during the regular work shift could be increased to 0.8 work units if it constituted overtime work. To further encourage members to work overtime, local newspapers routinely published articles on exceptional Mennonite farm workers as well as an honour roll listing those workers who had earned an exceptional number of work days. The newspapers also occasionally published a "lazybones list" which highlighted the names of Mennonite workers who had failed miserably to meet their work quotas. In January of 1934, for example, Stürmer published an honour roll and lazybones list for the *Bauer* collective farm (Chortitza) for 1933. Some Mennonite men and women who were listed on the honour roll and were praised as shining examples for other members to emulate had individually earned from 333 to as many as 454 work days apiece in 1933. Conversely, there were other Mennonites who were ridiculed for earning very few work days -- from 98 to as few as 9 workdays.[119] Notwithstanding these incentives, many Mennonites, after having worked a long 10-hour shift, refused to work overtime, except during the seeding and harvest seasons when their brigade leaders ordered them to work beyond their regular 10-hour shifts.

With the detailed categorization of every task performed by collective farm members government officials were convinced that they had developed the most egalitarian system of ascertaining what wages and food rations each member had rightfully earned. It was up to the accountant and the bookkeeper to implement the system, to keep detailed lists of the number of work units earned by each member, and to determine how much in wages and rations each member should receive. This was by no means a simple, straightforward accounting procedure. At the beginning of each year, the accountant had to estimate how many work units and how much money each member would likely earn in wages by the end of the year.[120] During the course of the year the accountant usually authorized 2 advance payments of food products and money to each member. These advances were debited against each member's account, and no one was allowed to accrue a total debt that was more than 60% of his or her estimated wages. At the end of each year, the accountant tallied up all of the work units earned by each member. The accountant also determined what the overall income was for the collective farm in both cash and crops. From the total collective farm income, the accountant first deducted the government quotas of grain and meat assessed to the collective farm. He also took into account the amount of grain that each member household had supplied or failed to supply in light of individual quotas that were assigned to them. After making these deductions, the accountant then subtracted the taxes that the government assessed to each household, as well as the fees and "voluntary" contributions that the collective was required to make to the local MTS for the use of its machinery. The taxes alone -- which included the self-tax, income tax, head tax, yard tax, cooperative tax, insurance tax, state loans, and contributions to various government organizations, such as the Red Army and the committee for the elimination of illiteracy -- often siphoned off most, and in some cases all of the monetary earnings that a member earned during the year. The accountant also deducted any other "voluntary" contributions that the collective farm made to government programs and to charities such as the Red Cross. In the village of Rosenort (Molotschna), for example, the accountant was required to take into account the collective's donation of 100 rubles to the Soviet government in 1930 for the criminal prosecution of enemies of the state, and in particular the "noxious persons of the Industry party."[121] After the quotas, taxes, MTS fees, and voluntary donations were subtracted, the accountant deducted the amount of seed grain the collective would require for next year's crops, as well as an estimated amount of fodder needed to feed the livestock of the collective. Once these deductions were made, the accountant subtracted the amount of food, bonuses, and wages required for the collective farm executive, and for the handicapped and elderly. The total amount of food and money that was left after all of these deductions was then divided by the total number of work units earned by all of the collective farm members during the year. The resulting sum represented how much food and money each work unit was worth. This number was then multiplied by the number of work units that each member earned during the year, which provided the gross annual income for each member. From the gross annual income of each member, the accountant subtracted the food and monetary debts and added any bonuses that the member had accumulated during the year. The final sum was equivalent to the annual net income of food and money for the member. After all of the required deductions were taken into account, the final tally of food and wages for many collective farm members was very meagre at best.[122]

The wages and rations that a collective farm member received very much depended upon his or her position within the collective. Surprising as it may seem, some collective farm chairmen and accountants earned relatively low wages compared to those earned by factory workers or school teachers. At one collective in Ukraine, for example, the chairman received 40 rubles per month, while the accountant earned 35 rubles per month. Most chairmen and accountants would have found it difficult to survive on these wages if they did not receive supplemental food rations and free accommodation from the collectives. This arrangement did not apply to school teachers, however, who were often required to pay for their food and housing, despite being members of the collectives. Their salaries were usually paid by the government and ranged from as low as 70 rubles per week for teachers who taught younger children to as much as 95 rubles per week for those who taught the more advanced grades. Despite their relatively high wages, however, few teachers were able to save any money. One Mennonite teacher explained that most of his two-month salary of 700 rubles was taken by the collective for food and rent. Whatever was left went toward supporting his less fortunate relatives, and as a result, he very rarely had enough money to buy anything for himself.[123] The reality was that school teachers were seldom better off monetarily than collective chairmen or accountants.

While the monetary rewards for collective farm chairmen, accountants, and teachers left much to be desired, they were certainly better than those of the other members of the collective farm. Throughout the early 1930's, collectivized Mennonites found it very difficult to survive on the inadequate wages and niggardly food rations provided by the collectives and many died prematurely from malnutrition and exhaustion. This callous treatment of collective farm workers was evident early on in 1930 when wages for many collectivized Mennonites in Ukraine and the Crimea rarely exceeded 1 ruble for a 10-hour work shift. Although Mennonites at collectives such as those near Memrik (Ignatievo [Dzerzhyns'ke]), Neuenberg (Chortitza), and Rosengart (Chortitza), earned between 1 and 1.53 rubles for a full day of work, the average daily wage ranged between 20 and 70 kopecks at many collectives in the Molotschna colony as well as those at Adelsheim, Einlage, Franzfeld, Kronsweide, Neuendorf, Neuhorst, and Schöneberg in the Chortitza and Yazykovo colonies.[124] The executive at a collective near Blumengart (Chortitza) paid some of its members as little as 18 kopecks per workday. In some cases, collective farm authorities paid members only a small fraction of their rightful wages. Such was the experience of a collectivized Mennonite in the Molotschna colony who was paid only 35 rubles for 1,676 hours of work. A similar injustice befell 3 Mennonite men who worked the entire summer at the Friedensfeld collective and received only 30 rubles each for their efforts. Some collective farm authorities treated their members even more ruthlessly, using government-imposed grain quotas, taxes, MTS fees, and other deductions to reduce a family's wages to nothing. In 1931, for instance, a Mennonite family in the Lichtenau (Molotschna) collective earned 360 work units, which was equivalent to 244.6 rubles before deductions. Once the deductions were taken into account by collective farm officials, however, the family learned that it owed the government a total of 406.8 rubles -- 85 rubles in obligations, 80 rubles in tractor shares, 12 rubles in self-taxes, 7.8 rubles in vegetable taxes, 150 rubles worth of grain, and an additional amount which was to be supplied in eggs and fruit. Since the deductions amounted to more than its annual income, the family was indebted to the government. Without money, the family could not purchase any food for the following year; the household's food supply became so serious that they did not even have enough grain to make grain coffee. With government-imposed deductions taking a lion's share of the annual incomes of collective farm members, collectivized Mennonites were simply unable to purchase enough food for their families, let alone fodder for their livestock.[125]

It may come as a surprise that many Mennonites did not see any significant decrease in their wages during the famine year of 1932. It is true that some collectives continued to treat their members despicably, paying them almost nothing for their work: Mennonites at collective farms in Blumengart (Chortitza), Chortitza, Franzfeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Friedensfeld (Borozenko [Kamianka]), Hochfeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Neuendorf (Chortitza), Neuhorst (Chortitza), Nieder-Chortitza (Chortitza), Rosenbach (Chortitza), and Schöneberg (Chortitza) only received between 20 and 70 kopecks for a full day of work.[126] At Kronsweide (Chortitza) the wages were as low as 14 kopecks per day in 1932, and some collectives even refused to pay any wages to their members at all. But there were also some Mennonites who witnessed slight to significant increases in their wages. This was the case for members at the Adelsheim (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]) and Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]) collectives who were paid between 75 and 80 kopecks for a 10-hour work shift. At other collectives near Einlage (Chortitza), Kronstal (Chortitza), and Neuenberg (Chortitza), Mennonites earned between 1 and 1.22 rubles for a day's work. In Lichtenau (Molotschna), some members who worked at the local agricultural society received anywhere from 24 rubles to 130 rubles per month in 1932.[127] With drought conditions affecting a number of regions in the Ukrainian and Crimean countryside at this time, any increase in daily wages was appreciated.

Wages continued to fluctuate throughout 1933. In those villages where there was a decrease in wages -- such as Adelsheim (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Neuenberg (Chortitza), Neuendorf (Chortitza), and Neuhorst (Chortitza) -- the decrease ranged from 10% to 35%. Some village collectives even reduced wages by as much as 64%. At a collective near Kronstal (Chortitza), for example, the average daily wage for a member dropped from 1.22 rubles in 1932 to 0.48 rubles in 1933 -- a reduction of almost 61%. Drastic wage reductions were also recorded at a collective near Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), where daily earnings dropped by 64% from 75 kopecks per day in 1932 to 28 kopecks per day in 1933. The Burwalde collective went so far as to pay some of its members as little as 12 kopecks for a day's work.[128] Other collectives, on the other hand, increased daily wages by 20%, 50%, and sometimes more than 100%. Mennonites living on collectives near Chortitza, Einlage (Chortitza), Gnadental (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]), Grünfeld (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]), Kronsweide (Chortitza), Nikolaital (Borozenko [Kamianka]), and Steinau (Borozenko [Kamianka]) received between 1 and 1.7 rubles for a 10-hour work shift. Compared to these villages, the members of collectives near Rosengart (Chortitza) and Kronsfeld (Molotschna) were especially fortunate to be earning a daily wage of 2.19 and 2.5 rubles respectively.[129]

The food rations that supplemented the monetary earnings of collective farm members were rarely adequate, but there were a few Mennonites who fared relatively well while living on the collectives. One of the exceptions was a collectivized Mennonite household from the Molotschna colony that received 200 rubles at the end of the 1930 harvest. Each member of the household also received 15 poods of wheat, 3 poods of rye, 27 poods of barley, 15 poods of oats, 1 *fuder* of millet straw, a ½ *fuder* of corn straw, 2 *fuders* of corn ears, and 27 poods of beets. Some households also received an additional 15 *fuders* of straw and 25 *fuders* of chaff to be used as fuel for heating their ovens. These rations met most of the needs of the families at this collective, but such generous food rations were a rare occurrence. At the end of the 1930 harvest in Einlage (Chortitza), for example, each member of the local collective received from 12 to 16 poods of grain -- the only grain that the members were entitled to receive until the next harvest. At another collective, full-time workers, children between 5 and 12 years of age and adults over 70 years of age each received 15 poods of grain. Children between the ages of 1 and 5, on the other hand, were each given 10 poods of grain, while children under the age of one were allotted 6 poods of grain.[130] Even scantier food rations were reported at other collectives. At the Tiege (Molotschna) collective, each member received a mere 5 poods of grain for work during the summer and autumn months; those who earned extra credit with village authorities received additional grain for their families. Mennonites at another collective in the Crimea were given 13 poods of grain, all of which was later confiscated by authorities. Members at other collectives received 15 pounds of flour per month, while 6 kilograms of flour was the only sustenance given to some Mennonite families at the Kronsweide (Chortitza) collective. In some collectives officials gave each of their members between 200 and 500 grams of food per day. Conditions at the Felsenbach collective (Borozenko [Kamianka]) deteriorated to the point where officials could only afford to feed pig fodder to the members.[131]

In 1931 the food situation generally became worse as most collectivized Mennonites were provided with less grain and fewer food commodities than in 1930. At collectives in the Sagradowka region and near Friedensruhe (Molotschna) Mennonite households were relatively fortunate when they received as much as 10 poods of flour or grain after the harvest of 1931. This was because members at other collectives received significantly less in food rations. At the Osterwick (Chortitza) collective, for example, each member who worked 240 days was entitled to receive a wage of either 18 rubles or 1.5 poods of flour. Similarly, an inhabitant at a collective near Blumenort (Molotschna) was allotted only a ½ pood of flour after the harvest -- an amount that was supposed to sustain the member until the following year.[132]

Collective farm members who received daily rations fared no better than those who were paid on an annual basis. The Mennonite members at collectives in Adelsheim (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Chortitza (Chortitza), Kronsweide (Chortitza), and Osterwick (Chortitza) each received 3 to 3.5 kilograms of grain per day, while those living on collectives at Neuenberg (Chortitza) and Schöneberg (Chortitza) obtained slightly smaller daily rations ranging between 2 and 2.5 kilograms of grain.[133] Even less fortunate were the Mennonites working at collectives near Blumenfeld (Borozenko [Kamianka]), Burwalde (Chortitza), Einlage (Chortitza), Franzfeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Hochfeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Neuendorf (Chortitza), Neuhorst (Chortitza), and Rosengart (Chortitza); they each received between 0.9 and 1.7 kilograms of grain per day.[134] Inadequate rations were the order of the day at other collectives: at the Woronesh collective each member received a mere 300 grams of bread per day, at Memrik [Selydove] 250 grams of flour per day, and at Blumengart (Chortitza) 200 grams of grain per day. One Mennonite family in Lichtenau (Molotschna) had to survive on 5 pounds of millet porridge (occasionally supplemented with sunflower oil) per week.[135]

The circumstances surrounding food rations turned from bad to worse in 1932. Although there were a few exceptions, most collective farm officials had significantly reduced the yearly, monthly, or daily rations of their members at this time. For their 141 work days earned in the summer of 1932, for instance, Mennonite members at one collective in Ukraine received 104 kilograms of Welsh corn, 60 kilograms of wheat, 18 kilograms of barley, and 16 kilograms of rye. Significantly smaller yearly food rations were allotted to two Mennonites who earned 92 work days at the Burwalde (Chortitza) collective and received a small amount of rye flour, 3 kilograms of barley flour, and 2 poods of corn for their labour. Misfortune also befell a collectivized Mennonite family living in Waldheim (Molotschna). After receiving and eating some of the 14 poods of corn that it had received from the collective, the family was ordered to return 10.5 poods of the corn as well as other food and possessions to the officials.[136]

Shortages of daily food rations were critical in other areas as well. At a collective near Tiege (Molotschna), for example, those Mennonite members who were able to work received 1.5 kilograms of grain per day while those unable to work received 0.5 kilograms. In the Chortitza region the largest daily rations -- between 1.1 and 1.5 kilograms of grain per day -- were portioned out to Mennonites working on collectives near Kronsweide (Chortitza), Neuendorf (Chortitza), Neuhorst (Chortitza), Rosenbach (Chortitza), and Schöneberg (Chortitza). Collective farm members living in Chortitza, Einlage (Chortitza), Franzfeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Hochfeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Kronstal (Chortitza), and Neuenberg (Chortitza) had to make do with 0.7 to 0.97 kilograms of grain per day. Less fortunate were those who received between 0.42 and 0.6 kilograms of grain per day while working at collectives in Adelsheim (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Blumenfeld (Borozenko [Kamianka]), Friedensfeld (Borozenko [Kamianka]), Nieder-Chortitza (Chortitza), Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Rosengart (Chortitza), and Steinau (Borozenko [Kamianka]).[137] Conditions were even more desperate in other areas. The daily rations for collective farm members in Blumengart (Chortitza), Osterwick (Chortitza), and Schönhorst (Chortitza) ranged between a mere 0.2 and 0.3 kilograms of grain per day, while the daily rations at the Lichtenau (Molotschna) collective amounted to 0.2 kilograms of bread. In Rosenort (Sagradowka), members received a scant 0.114 kilograms of grain per day while those working at the Ohrloff (Molotschna) collective were given daily rations amounting to as little as a 1/4 pound of bread. At collectives near Blumenfeld (Borozenko [Kamianka]) and

Altonau (Sagradowka), members received their miserly food rations on a haphazard basis, and often went without any rations for long periods of time.[138]

In the first six months of 1933 skimpy food rations were still the order of the day at many collective farms in Ukraine and the Crimea. This was the case for collectivized Mennonites near Spat (Crimea [Oktiabrs'ke]), who each received about 200 grams of bread per day and 35 rubles per month. The same was true for a Mennonite family in the Fürstenland [Rohachyk] colony who had to survive on 400 grams of maize per day; in Rosenort (Molotschna) collectivized farmers received 1.5 litres of milk and 100 grams of flour per day while working during the harvest season. Parsimonious rations were also common in a Yazykovo [Lukashivka] collective, where most members supplemented their diet of potatoes with soup made from colts' hooves.[139] Soon after the harvest of 1933, however, many collective farms significantly increased their members' food rations. Daily food rations of 1.1 to 1.5 kilograms of grain were handed out to each working member in the Gnadental (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]) and Kronstal (Chortitza) collectives, while daily rations of 3 to 4 kilograms of grain were portioned out to each member at collectives near Chortitza (Chortitza), Friedensfeld (Borozenko [Kamianka]), Neuenberg (Chortitza), Nieder-Chortitza (Chortitza), Osterwick (Chortitza), Rosengart (Chortitza), and Schönhorst (Chortitza).[140] Significantly higher rations of 5 to 6.2 kilograms of grain per workday were doled out to members in collectives at Tiege (Molotschna), Adelsheim (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Burwalde (Chortitza), Einlage (Chortitza), Kronsweide (Chortitza), Neuendorf (Chortitza), Neuhorst (Chortitza), Rosenbach (Chortitza), Schöneberg (Chortitza), and Schöndorf (Borozenko [Kamianka]). In some villages such as Blumenfeld (Borozenko [Kamianka]), Franzfeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Hochfeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), and Steinau (Borozenko [Kamianka]), the daily rations for each working collectivized peasant reached an unprecedented 8 to 9.6 kilograms of grain. In villages such as Rosenort (Molotschna), local Communist Party cells even went so far as to encourage collective farm members to purchase a cow or calf to supplement their food rations. The unexpected increases in daily food rations in the autumn of 1933 came as a welcome surprise to Mennonites, signalling an end to months of famine rations.[141]

The wages and rations earned by Mennonite collective farm members bore no relation to the work that they were ordered to perform. Moreover, every year the workload for most members increased while the food rations and wages decreased. At first glance, it would appear that the collective farm executive ought to be held responsible for the hunger, suffering, and disease resulting from inadequate rations and wages, since each collective farm executive determined what their members would receive as remuneration. On closer analysis, however, final responsibility for the inadequate wages lies with local and central authorities whose excessive taxes and quotas made it impossible for collective farms to pay their workers adequately. Insufficient wages and rations were the unavoidable consequences of a government policy which effectively used taxes and quotas as a means of annually dekulakizing the collectivized farm population. They were a means of punishing collective farm workers for failing to keep up with the impossible demands of the local and central governments.

The Demand for Consumer Goods

Persistent food shortages between 1930 and 1933 were also matched by chronic shortages in clothing, footwear, and other consumer goods for collective farm workers. Although some collective farm officials occasionally splurged and purchased large-ticket items (such as motorcycles) for their collectives, most found it impossible to supply even the most essential consumer products for their members. This was the case for collectivized Mennonites in Gnadenfeld (Molotschna), who complained that the severe shortage of clothing in their collective forced many of them to continue wearing the same clothes that they had worn since World War I. When a rare shipment of clothing, shoes, or other goods did arrive at the collective, the shipment was often not large enough to satisfy the needs of all of the members. This was the complaint of Mennonites at the Tiege (Molotschna) village collective, who attended a collective farm meeting that arbitrarily determined which individuals would be allowed to purchase footwear from a recent shipment of shoes (for a price of 7.50 to 15.75 rubles per pair).[142] The 200 members of the Kronsweide (Chortitza) collective experienced a similar dilemma. After being in desperate need of new clothing for some time, they received the following shipment of goods which they were expected to share between themselves: 2 overcoats, 4 fur caps, 2 men's suits, 2 dresses, 15 women's blouses, 20 men's shirts, 20 pairs of underwear, 2 pairs of warm underwear, 15 pairs of women's stockings, 15 pairs of men's socks, 5 pairs of silk stockings, 25 pairs of children's socks, 75 handkerchiefs, 2 kettles, 1 wash basin, and 1 coffee container. Lotteries were subsequently held to determine who would receive a highly sought-after piece of clothing or household item. In August of 1931 arguments broke out among 24 male members of the Spat (Crimea [Oktiabrs'ke]) collective who were all vying for 1 of the 8 pairs of pants that came in the latest delivery.[143]

Widespread shortages of lumber, soap, and cooking fuel also posed problems for collective farm members between 1930 and 1933. Acquiring lumber and nails was almost impossible in a number of village collectives in the Molotschna colony and the Crimea. Laundry soap was also in short supply, forcing some Mennonites to use salt and kerosene (when available) as substitute detergents for cleaning their clothes. Alternatives for petroleum, kerosene, coal, and firewood also had to be found for cooking and heating. In village collectives near Münsterberg (Molotschna), Schönsee (Molotschna), and the Woronesh area, straw was the primary fuel used to heat household ovens. To stave off the cold during long winter nights, Mennonites at a number of collectives in the Chortitza colony burned animal dung, books, and in some cases lumber from their accommodations to keep warm.[144]

The failure of collective farm officials to acquire adequate consumer goods for their members translated into long queues and empty shelves at collective farm stores. It was not uncommon for members at some collectives to wait in line for 4 or more hours or until the early hours of the next morning before being allowed to enter one of these stores to purchase supplemental rations. At one store in a Chortitza collective, for example, there were often queues of more than 100 people who waited until 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. to purchase what little sugar or sunflower oil the store recently received. On one occasion when a shipment of goods had arrived, the militia had to be called in to break up a crowd of several hundred people who gathered at the store and who eventually broke down the door in the middle of the night. Despite such enormous demands for food and consumer goods little was done to remedy the problem. A Mennonite from Osterwick (Chortitza) complained that liquor, powder, and perfume were the only commodities that could be purchased at the collective store; he also stated that on the few occasions when meat was available, it was usually from diseased livestock or stray cats. The limited selection of food stuffs, along with the fact that many of the items at collective farm stores were heavily taxed by the government severely curtailed what little purchasing power the average collective farm member had.[145]

To obtain goods that were not available at collective farm stores, Mennonites sometimes bartered their own possessions in exchange for hard-to-get items or bought them on the black market, usually at exorbitant prices. As early as 1930, bartering became the chief means by which many collectivized Mennonites in the Memrick [Selydove] region acquired consumer goods. In other regions the black market was still the most popular means of acquiring goods. Not everyone, however, could afford to pay black market prices for commodities. In 1930, for example, butter sold for between 2.5 and 5 rubles per pound, sugar was 2 rubles per kilogram, and potatoes cost between 6 and 9 rubles per pood.[146] Higher black market prices for these commodities in 1931 forced peasants to dig deeper in their pockets: the price of a pound of butter jumped to around 4.5 rubles, a kilogram of sugar to between 2.5 and 3.5 rubles, and a pood of potatoes fetched between 6.5 and 12 rubles. By 1932 and 1933 the black market prices for these products were out of reach for most collective farm members. Butter prices rose to between 9 and 10 rubles per pound, sugar now sold for approximately 16 rubles per kilogram, and the price of potatoes leaped to as high as 45 rubles per pood.[147] Because many collectivized Mennonites were earning less than 30 rubles a month, few could afford to supplement their meagre rations with black market commodities.

Just as black market food supplies were too expensive for most Mennonites, so too were black market clothing and footwear. The price of some clothes was equal to a month's, and in some cases a year's wages. In Spat (Crimea [Oktiabrs'ke]), for example, a pair of pants generally sold for between 15 and 16 rubles; a pair of galoshes sold for about the same price. Around Chortitza a pair of shoes could be purchased for 40 rubles, while in other areas the same shoes fetched between 100 and 250 rubles. A pair of boots, on the other hand, was generally priced between 50 and 80 rubles. An untailored suit usually ranged from 100 to 150 rubles, although the price could go as high as 225 rubles in the Chortitza area.[148] These prohibitively high prices forced most Mennonites to make or mend their own clothes and footwear if and when they could acquire the material to do so.

There were a few occasions when the availability of consumer goods improved significantly, albeit temporarily, for some collective farm members. One such occasion was when a foreign delegation of dignitaries, officials, or reporters appeared with an inspection tour of collectives in a certain region. A few days before a delegation was scheduled to visit a particular collective farm, government authorities ordered the collective farm executive to lower the prices of goods in the farm store drastically, and to provide extra rations to the members before the foreign visitors and Soviet officials accompanying them arrived. In commenting on this policy, a Mennonite member at one collective farm in Ukraine reported that food prices in the region suddenly dropped immediately before the foreign minister from Turkey began a tour of the region. Officials at another collective in Ukraine distributed additional supplies of pork and other food products to Mennonite collective farm members when a foreign delegation of 20 people arrived. A number of banquets and a significant reduction in the price of food commodities also took place in the Chortitza area when 4,000 foreign delegates reportedly visited the Dnieper dam in the fall of 1932. In describing this gala event, one Mennonite noted that the price of a pood of potatoes dropped from 45 rubles to 3 rubles in the span of a few days. Unfortunately, Mennonites living in the area were not permitted to speak to the foreign visitors without a Soviet official present.[149] As one Mennonite from the Memrik [Selydove] region complained, "if only the Moscow officials would leave the foreign delegates alone [with collective farm members]... the foreigners would soon get a true picture of what life on the artel is all about."[150] Not long after the foreign delegation left the region, the generosity of local officials was abruptly discontinued and inadequate food rations coupled with high food prices once again became the norm.

Another occasion when the availability of consumer products increased significantly was when foreign currency and food parcels arrived from relatives and relief agencies in North America and Europe. Although Soviet officials routinely taxed, and occasionally destroyed foreign correspondence, the letters and parcels that did get through helped to save or improve the lives of thousands of collectivized Mennonites. With their gifts of foreign currency, collectivized Mennonites purchased foodstuffs and other necessities at the Torgsin stores where food products and consumer goods were readily available at significantly reduced prices. The foreign currency also helped Mennonites to acquire goods on the black market.[151] Although acquiring monetary and material aid from the West sometimes entailed arrest, imprisonment, or exile, collectivized Mennonites generally assumed the risk and continued to solicit aid from any North American and European who was sympathetic to their plight.

Food packages and currency from the West diminished but never satisfied the demand for consumer goods in Mennonite-populated regions. Notwithstanding government promises to reward collectivized households with consumer products, such products rarely found their way into the countryside and those that did were usually too expensive for the average collective farm member to purchase. The Soviet government's failure to provide consumer goods forced many collectivized Mennonites to depend on foreign aid to meet their basic needs. Even Mennonite officials, who routinely pilfered and taxed packages and letters from the West, came to rely on a steady flow of Western aid to supplement their incomes. It is no wonder that government propaganda concerning the economic superiority of USSR vis à vis the West fell on deaf Mennonite ears long before the collectivization of Ukraine and the Crimea was complete.

The Demographic Consequences of Collectivizing the Mennonite Community

Notwithstanding the large amount of foreign currency and the numerous food parcels that came from North America and Europe, Western aid was unable to prevent the widespread privation, hunger, and premature death that affected Ukrainian and Crimean Mennonites as early as 1930 and 1931. Foreign aid, however, could not compete with government-sponsored grain quotas and house searches that repeatedly depleted the food reserves of most Mennonite households. To cope with ongoing food shortages some village collectives, such as those near Tiege (Molotschna) and Rosenort (Molotschna), established community kitchens as early as 1931 to provide food for those in need. A number of Mennonites also travelled to other regions in the USSR where they purchased food to bring back to their families in Ukraine and the Crimea.[152] For other Mennonites, their material want was already so desperate in 1930 and 1931 that they ate rotting vegetables, diseased horses and pigs, and dead cats and dogs in order to survive. It did not take long for some of these Mennonites to succumb to disease and starvation, while others committed suicide to end their suffering.[153]

What were some of the demographic effects of hunger, disease, and starvation on the Mennonite community in the early 1930s? Privation, food shortages, and disease had a significant impact on the average number of children per family in various Mennonite communities during the first years of the Soviet collectivization program. Among 19 Mennonite-populated villages in the Chortitza-Yazykovo region, for example, there were on average 3.7 children per family in 1928 and 1929. In 1930, this number dropped to 3.5, and in 1931 it slid to 3.3. A slightly lower average number of 3.2 children per family was reported in 1932, but by 1933, this number had dropped to 2.9.[154] This represented a 22% decline in the average number of children per family in the Chortitza-Yazykovo region between the late 1920s and the early 1930s. When compared with data from the Chortitza-Yazykovo region, the decline in the average number of children per family in 23 villages in the Piatykhatky (near the Schlactin-Baratov colony) region varies slightly but not significantly between 1928 and 1933. In 1928, for example, there were approximately 4.0 children per family in the Piatykhatky region. By 1929, however, this number had been reduced to 3.8. A major reduction in the average number of children per family occurred in 1930 when it dropped to 3.3 children for each family. The average number was further reduced to 3.0 in 1931, and continued to remain at 3.0 in 1932 and 1933. As was the case for Chortitza, the average number of children per family in the Piatykhatky region also dropped to an unprecedented low in the 1930's, witnessing a 25% decrease.[155] In both the Piatykhatky and Chortitza regions the demographic repercussions of widespread hunger and disease resulted in stunting the continued growth of the larger Mennonite communities.

The "ABC's" of a Soviet Education

The Soviet collectivization program not only had a significant effect on the average number of children born in Mennonite communities in Ukraine and the Crimea, but also had a profound impact on how Mennonite children would be educated. Prior to 1930, Mennonite communities still determined much of the curriculum of preschool and school programs, and which often included courses in religious subjects. All of this changed in late 1929 and early 1930 when the Soviet government wrested control of the education of the Mennonite youth from local communities, and dictated that its own curriculum and programs be implemented in the schools. To accomplish this the government instructed the local ECDS and village soviets to create education commissions (some of which were chaired by Mennonites) to Sovietize the school curriculum: that is, to develop education programs that would eradicate illiteracy, rid the school system of kulaks and all religious influences, and inculcate the ideals of the state into Mennonite children. They were also required to Sovietize teachers who would be in the vanguard of this educational revolution in the Mennonite countryside.[156] To ascertain the social origins, political leanings, and suitability of local teachers to participate and lead this revolution, Communist Party members, ECDS officials, and government-appointed school inspectors (many of whom were of Mennonite origin) who circulated questionnaires among the teachers within their respective jurisdictions in May and June of 1930.[157] In the Molotschna and Chortitza regions, where Mennonites constituted the vast majority of teachers, the questionnaires required each teacher to disclose the following information: personal data, such as date and place of birth, father's name, and educational training; social origin (that is, whether his or her parents belonged to the class of poor peasants, middle peasants, or kulaks); familiarity with and knowledge of the Ukrainian language; the school subjects that he or she taught; affiliations with the Communist Party, government agencies, anti-religious circles, or professional associations; and prior involvement with the Red Army or other military associations. Those Mennonite teachers who failed to provide the "correct" answers to the questionnaire, who belonged to an unacceptable social class, or who were unlikely to teach the party line in their classrooms were dismissed from their positions and in some cases dekulakized.[158]

The indoctrination of Soviet ideals was to begin in the nurseries and kindergartens attended by Mennonite children as young as 3-months old. Apart from helping the children learn how to walk and speak, the nursery staff were also required to teach the children songs and lessons that centred around the basic tenets of Soviet ideology, ridiculed religious beliefs, and praised the expulsion of the kulak from the countryside. Most children on the collective farms attended a day nursery until they were 4 to 6 years of age, and then went to kindergarten where they continued their instruction in Soviet ideology. When the children reached 7 or 8 years of age they were enrolled in the Soviet school system where ideological instruction was even more intense.[159] In 1923 the Soviet government decreed it compulsory for children to attend elementary school, and in 1930 it required all children to attend secondary school until they were 14 or 15 years of age. Rather than employing a 12-grade system of classes used in other countries, Soviet schools adopted a 4-grade system, and in some cases a 2-grade system depending on the paucity of teachers in the region. Many of the schools in Mennonite-populated villages also organized "work schools" where the school curriculum had an agricultural focus aimed at training future collective farm members. With their children being exposed to constant Soviet indoctrination, Mennonite parents who wanted to impart their religious convictions to their offspring found it very difficult to compete with the schools for control of the minds of their children.[160]

The backgrounds of the pupils who attended the schools were also closely examined by local authorities. To keep track of the social origins of the children, school teachers forwarded to village soviets and the ECDS lists of the names of their pupils, their nationality, and their social background -- that is, whether their parents were kulaks, middle peasants, labourers, or poor peasants. This information was used to determine which pupils were entitled to education bursaries, attend agricultural and vocational schools, or belong to government-sanctioned associations such as the Pioneers. The information was also used in the implementation of Ukrainian language programs in the school system.[161] Although German continued to be the chief language of instruction in many Mennonite communities between 1930 and 1932, there were diligent government efforts to increase the use of Ukrainian by Mennonite teachers in the classroom. In early 1930, for example, government functionaries examined Mennonite teachers on their knowledge of and ability to teach in the

Ukrainian language. By mid-1930 Mennonite schools were provided with lists of Ukrainian textbooks ranging in subject from grammar to advanced mathematics, and which Mennonite students were required to read. In 1932, Mennonite teachers had to be able to provide instruction in either Ukrainian or Russian. Officials also parachuted non-Mennonite teachers who could not speak German into collective farms heavily populated with Mennonites in the hope of accelerating the Sovietization of this predominantly German-speaking religious minority.[162]

What were the results of the government's revolutionary programs in Mennonite-populated regions? While some Mennonites lauded the new Soviet education programs as ground-breaking and long overdue, most condemned them for being ill-conceived, underfunded, and destructive to long-held family and Christian values. Government funding for educational programs was non-existent in many Mennonite villages, and thus it was usually up to collective farm members to raise money for the programs. At the village collective in Tiege (Molotschna), for example, members were required to scrounge together 200 poods of grain to pay for local school programs and an additional 200 poods for the local hospital to ensure its continued operation. School cooperatives and school land funds were also organized in village collectives such as Neuendorf (Chortitza), Schönhorst (Chortitza), and Rosengart (Chortitza), in order to raise money and acquire land for various local educational programs. In some collectives, members raised more than a 1,000 rubles for the school land fund which was then used to acquire school land. The school land (which could amount to as much as 12 hectares) was seeded with crops and harvested by collective farm members who used the proceeds to pay the wages of the local teacher, renovate school rooms, and fund various educational programs.[163] Other collectives, on the other hand, simply could not obtain adequate funding for their schools, leaving teachers and students to work in inadequate, unheated facilities such as renovated factories or livestock stalls that were often overcrowded and dilapidated. It was often up to teachers and students to find their own supplies, including everything from coal for heating the school rooms to books for learning their lessons. Shortages of proper clothing and footwear, ongoing illness from local epidemics, and the requirement that children work in the fields during seeding and harvest prompted many pupils to stay away from school. To encourage better attendance some collectives found it necessary to raise additional monies to provide the children with warm clothing and regular school breakfast and lunch programs.[164]

There were other factors that also adversely affected the quality of education. One of these factors was the level of the teachers' training. The highly specialized training of teachers in Soviet universities and pedological institutions meant that many teachers were well trained in one or two school subjects, but unable to teach any others. As a result, some pupils obtained a first-class education in one or two fields, but did not receive an education that integrated various fields of learning. Moreover, very little attention was paid to developing a philosophy of education that addressed the needs of the children. All too often the teachers' conferences, which were touted as forums for discussing new educational programs, became political propaganda rallies used to support the policies of the local ECDS or Communist Party cell. Any philosophy that was developed at teachers' confrences had more to do with exposing the faults of the kulak class than teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic.[165] This was especially the case at vocational or "work" schools where the focus was on agricultural subjects and programs. In work schools at Neuendorf (Chortitza), Einlage (Chortitza), Neuenberg (Chortitza), Rosental (Chortitza), Schöneberg (Chortitza), Rosengart (Chortitza), Einlage (Chortitza), and Nieder-Chortitza (Chortitza), the curriculum included courses on such diverse topics as spring seeding programs, animal husbandry, the role of propaganda during the harvest, the important uses of manure, the role of the MTS, how the Soviet government has improved agriculture, the October revolution, the role of the kulak and the preacher in the emigration movement, the sinister work of the German relief agency *Brüder in Not*, and how to fight against kulaks, agitators, and preachers. If the children were allowed to go on field trips it was usually to a local factory, collective farm, or industrialization site (such as the Dnieper Hydroelectric Dam near Chortitza).[166] Not surprisingly, the courses and programs offered at schools in Mennonite-populated regions were intended to train students to be good collective farm workers rather than factory workers, engineers, or doctors.

The busy work schedules of teachers also affected the quality of education. Although teachers occasionally organized associations and conferences to update themselves on the latest education directives from the government, they were generally too busy with collective farm duties to attend such functions. Most teachers, for example, were required by the collective farm executive to provide evening school classes on agricultural and political topics for adult collective farm members. Not every member was allowed to attend such courses, and teachers were often required to meet with the collective farm executive in their spare time to determine who was entitled to register in the course (i.e., whether the member had earned at least 25 workdays in the month prior to when the course was offered), who was disqualified because of poor past performance in his or her work duties, and what punishment would be meted out to those members who previously failed to attend the courses on a regular basis. The collective farm executive also expected teachers to participate in one or more of the various collective farm commissions (such as the culture commission), and to organize Pioneer and Komsomol programs for the children.[167] Teachers, along with local members of the Komsomol, were often responsible for overseeing the cultural work of the collectives. Some of the cultural activities organized by teachers included theatrical productions, soviet literature discussions, and seminars on a wide variety of subjects including the superiority of the collective farm system, the foolishness of religious belief, the best seeding techniques, the eradication of illiteracy, the fight against emigration fever, and the benefits of belonging to the Communist Party. Often these cultural activities took place in the *Roten Ecke* and the *Bauernheims* -- reading rooms and social-labour organizations which were used to promote political, antireligious, and Communist Party policies to collective farm members.[168] School teachers also acted as the collective farm librarians, ensuring that Communist Party literature, soviet newspapers, anti-religious publications, and published records of punishments given to kulaks were always available in the *Roten Ecke* and school libraries. In Chortitza, Mennonite regional and school administrators even went so far as to instruct local school teachers to destroy unacceptable books in their libraries; they also instructed the teachers to organize a Pedagogical Museum which was intended to demonstrate the superiority of socialist planning and competition, the benefits of antireligious and international education, and the achievements of the children and their Pioneer clubs. Teachers soon recognized the importance of their work when local newspapers published progress reports on the cultural activities in particular collectives, along with the names of the collective farm teachers who were either praised or ridiculed for their efforts.[169]

Antireligious instruction also constituted a large component of a teacher's weekly activities. At the antireligious circle meetings, which emphasized the superiority of atheism over religious faith, teachers and students discussed questions such as where and what is heaven, what are angels, and if there were a God why would he allow sick children to die. To reinforce antireligious themes, teachers were encouraged to purchase antireligious placards (at a cost of 10 placards for 3.2 rubles) to hang on classroom walls and distribute to students.[170] To ensure that antireligious instruction was properly carried out, authorities sometimes dismissed and exiled Mennonite teachers who were accused of conspiring with kulaks or being Christians, and filled their position with teachers who were Communist Party members. In Rosengart (Chortitza), Neuendorf (Chortitza), Burwalde (Chortitza), and Pawlowka (Chortitza) Mennonite school inspectors fired Mennonite school teachers because of their religious convictions or their refusal to teach the tenets of communism. These scholastic purges sometimes resulted in village collectives having to cope with a short supply of adequately trained teachers and kindergarten workers for months at a time.[171]

For those Mennonite teachers who decided to toe the party line, their mandate included replacing their students' religious convictions with the ideological convictions of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin. In fact, some Mennonite teachers encouraged Mennonite pupils to renounce their religious beliefs and to reveal the names of relatives and family friends whom they suspected of being kulaks. To help achieve these ends, various groups, such as the "Red Partisans," the "Red Guards," the "Pioneers" (which included younger children), and the "Komsomols" (which included teenagers and young adults) were established in the schools to carry out the political work of the Communist Party among the children.[172] Those children who did not join these organizations were often ostracized by their school mates, and in some villages only children who were members of the Red Partisan, Pioneer, or Komsomol organizations were permitted to attend school. In the Chortitza colony, for example, there were schools that required all children to obtain special identification cards that provided such information as the child's social status (whether his or her parents were poor peasants, middle peasants, or labourers), the mental and physical health of the child, a history of the child's participation in Pioneer and Komsomol groups and school organizations, as well as comments about the child from the teacher or school council. Those without a card were not permitted to attend school.[173] Government officials and Communist Party members continually monitored those children who joined atheistic clubs, read Pioneer and Komsomol publications such as Die Trommel (a Berlin Communist Party paper), and Die Trompete, and participated in military instruction programs to begin their training as potential Red Army soldiers. In some villages Mennonite children also joined the local *Osoawiochim* cell, an organization which encouraged patriotism, trained its members how to defend the homeland, and provided instruction on the virtues of collective farm life. In other villages, the school curriculum included manual labour programs to foster the idea that collective farm work was important "Bolshevik work" for the country as a whole. To reward the children for their participation, the local ECDS organized Pioneer camps for the best Pioneers. Although attendance at such camps was not restricted to card-carrying Pioneers, space was often limited and therefore quotas were often imposed on how many children who were not Pioneers could attend the camps. In July of 1932, for example, the Mennonite president of the Molotschna ECDS stipulated that because of limited space at the local Pioneer camp the following restrictions would apply as to the number of non-Pioneer children who could attend the camp: 25% of all children selected could be non-Pioneer children but they had to be the best students in school, while the remaining 75% of children had to be the best Pioneers from their respective villages. Those chosen to attend were required to bring some clothes, shoes, a towel, a tooth brush, and two bathing suits.[174]

While the establishment of Pioneer and Komsomol groups in Mennonite communities had a significant impact on how Mennonite children were educated, this government initiative did not pose as serious a threat as the government's implementation of the 5-day or 6-day school week. These alternative school week schedules often required children to attend school on Sundays and religious holidays such as Christmas and Easter. The only holidays that the children could enjoy without fear of government reprisals were state-sanctioned socialist holidays such as May Day, October celebration, International Youth Day (September 1), and specific antireligious holidays. To counter the popularity of religious holidays such as Christmas and Easter, local officials and school teachers organized special anti-Christmas and anti-Easter campaigns, as well as "Spring-fest" holidays where the children read and sang state-sanctioned poems and songs, performed socialist plays, or provided demonstrations of gymnastic exercises. According to a Mennonite school teacher from Wawarowka (Chortitza), such campaigns and holidays were part of the antireligious program which prohibited children from attending church-sponsored events and required them to attend state-sanctioned holidays.[175] At the risk of being arrested, many Mennonite parents refused to allow their children to participate in these antireligious holidays. This was the case in Wawarowka (Chortitza), where only 64.3% of all of the school children attended the Spring-fest program in 1930. A similar complaint was lodged by a teacher at the Schönhorst (Chortitza) school who said that children rarely attended regular classes on days that were traditional religious holidays. Mennonite children and teachers who defied the orders of local officials and attended church meetings on Sundays and holidays were harshly punished if caught: the punishment was usually a stiff monetary fine, and in a number of cases the family's possessions were confiscated and the parents incarcerated. In some Mennonite villages, for example, the penalty for keeping a child out of school on Sunday ranged from a fine of 300 rubles to a jail term. The punishment for teachers attending religious services was also severe. A Mennonite teacher from Rosengart (Chortitza), for example, lost his teaching post in 1930 after he attended the baptism of his daughter in a local church.[176] Bent on eradicating all manifestations and vestiges of religious belief in the countryside, local officials believed that the imposition of such retributive penalties was justified.

Religious affiliations also determined which Mennonites would receive a post-secondary education. Usually labelled by government officials as devout Christians, the number of Mennonite children who met the government's criteria for post-secondary education was, not surprisingly very low. Moreover, many of those who did qualify chose to remain on the collective farms rather than obtain a higher education. There were some Mennonites, however, who did attend the trade schools in Chortitza and Zaporizhzhia where they obtained training in advanced agricultural studies, tool making, carpentry and woodwork (joining), stove-chimney construction, plastering, painting, and glass cutting. Trade school students were also required to take courses in political theory based on the works of Engels and Lenin. It was the task of school inspectors to ensure that the trade school curriculum contained an appropriate selection of both course-related works and state-sanctioned political books. Those who graduated from the trade school usually joined a local union or labour association such as *Robos* in the hope that they would obtain work in a local factory or industrial project.[177]

The classroom was one of the most important battlegrounds in the Soviet government's war against the Mennonite community. By dictating school agendas and curriculums, dekulakizing teachers who demonstrated any disloyalty to the state, and expelling those students of unacceptable class origins, local officials succeeded in immediately usurping control of a Mennonite educational system that had flourished for decades. Mennonites continued to occupy important administrative positions that determined how the new Soviet educational programs would be implemented, but as bureaucrats of the Soviet state they were responsible for purging inappropriate Mennonite religious and cultural influences in the schools and for dekulakizing those Mennonites who did not fit into the government's criteria of an acceptable Soviet teacher. As was the case with traditional Mennonite political and economic institutions, Mennonites working for the state participated in the dismantling of their educational institutions.

Were there any positive benefits that followed from the imposition of the Soviet educational programs? There were a few, one of which was the requirement for Mennonite teachers to learn the Ukrainian language and teach it to their Mennonite students. This policy certainly helped many Mennonite youth to integrate with their Ukrainian neighbours -- something which many of their parents found difficult to do even with fellow Ukrainian members in the same collective. Another benefit was the requirement for collective farm teachers to provide literacy and educational upgrading classes for adult members in the collectives. Although many of these classes were forums for Soviet propaganda, they did provide an opportunity for some collectivized Mennonites to improve their knowledge of relevant agricultural subjects.

The negative repercussions of the Soviet educational program, on the other hand, were numerous. First, the new policies instilled widespread fear in almost all Mennonite teachers, even the most pro-Soviet, who recognized that they too might one day be dismissed or dekulakized because of their ethnic background. Second, the policies incited fear and anxiety in the classroom as many Mennonite children were ostracized and expelled from school on the basis of their parents' purported kulak activities or religious convictions. This ostracization prompted some Mennonite children to tattle on their parents and neighbours in order to obtain the approval of their teachers and classmates. Third, the policies contributed to a general decline in the standard of education for Mennonite children. With more school time devoted to political propaganda, anti-religious subjects, and the benefits of the collectivization of Soviet agriculture, the competency of Mennonite children in such basic subjects as reading, writing, and arithmetic declined. Compounding the problem were the less than adequate facilities, school materials, and food rations, all of which made it difficult for the children to learn. And finally, the policies fragmented Mennonite households. Anti-religious propaganda in the schools and overt government pressure on Mennonite children to participate in government programs such as the Pioneers or the Komsomols created tension within many Mennonite households. Mennonites who allowed their children to participate in such programs feared that their children would abandon their religious faith or divulge family secrets that could result in the dekulakization of family members. Mennonites who refused to allow their children to participate in state-sanctioned youth programs often came under the scrutiny of the collective farm executive and felt under pressure from their own children, who wanted to conform and receive the same treatment as other children. The result was a schism in the relationship between some Mennonite parents and their children.

The Attack on Religious Faith

In tandem with government endeavours to eradicate religious faith among school children were other antireligious measures directed toward the collectivized peasantry as a whole. These measures included the monitoring of all religious activities within the Mennonite community and aggressive antireligious propaganda campaigns in an effort to compel Mennonites to abandon their religious convictions and adopt the creed of atheism. As in 1928 and 1929, the antireligious campaigns and clubs that operated between 1930 and 1933 were sponsored by the Communist Party, the League of the Godless, and the government. Their collective efforts included embarrassing, punishing, and exiling those who refused to renounce their religious faith.[178] In the Chortitza colony, for instance, the regime made use of the newspaper Stürmer to humiliate Mennonites for their church services, Bible studies, and songs about Jesus. The newspaper also published the recantations of Mennonites who had renounced their religious belief in favour of atheism and printed excerpts from the local and national Communist Party meetings which attempted to dictate what kind of antireligious behaviour the government expected from its citizens. In other cases the government used more coercive measures to try to convince Mennonites of the superiority of the antireligious cause. In the autumn of 1931, for instance, officials at various collectives in the Molotschna colony threatened to divest collectivized Mennonites of their food ration cards if they refused to forsake their Christian beliefs and join the local League of the Godless circles. Officials also advised members of the Friedensruhe (Molotschna) collective farm that those who refused to enlist in the local League of the Godless between November 1 and December 1, 1931 would be exiled. Many Mennonites resisted these government attacks on religious faith, but others paid lip service to the government's atheistic creeds to avoid any additional suffering and hardship for their families.[179]

Gouging taxes on church property also proved to be an effective tactic in the government's campaign to eradicate religious devotion in the countryside. As was the case when their ministers were taxed excessively, Mennonite congregations also took it upon themselves to collect the funds for escalating church property taxes. Local government officials routinely increased these property taxes to such incredible amounts that it soon became impossible for Mennonite parishioners to pay them. This was the experience of a Mennonite congregation in Memrik [Selydove] which saw its church property levies increase between 1,000 and 2,000 rubles every 2 weeks. It did not take long for Mennonite congregations to default on their tax obligations after such tax hikes became a routine occurrence.[180]

When a congregation failed to pay property taxes or a government-sanctioned group demanded to use church property for non-religious purposes, local officials immediately seized the Mennonite church building. The overwhelmingly majority of Mennonite churches were subsequently converted into collective farm offices, cafeterias, clubhouses, hospitals, reading rooms, theatres, sports complexes, schools, workshops, storage areas, and granaries between 1930 and 1933. In Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), Neu-Chortitza (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]), Spat (Crimea [Oktiabrs'ke]), and Karassan (Crimea [Oktiabrs'ke]), for instance, a number of Mennonite churches were used as clubhouses and schools. In Memrik [Selydove] one Mennonite church was turned into a reading hall, two others were converted into a collective farm office and an orphanage, and several other churches were used as granaries.[181] Alternate uses for Mennonite churches also took place in the Chortitza region. After discontent broke out over the staging of Christmas celebrations at local Mennonite churches in the winter of 1930-1931, local officials granted factory workers in Chortitza permission to convert some local churches into clubhouses for workers and other groups and to tear down other Mennonites churches and use the land for other purposes. At the same time, an antireligious group in Chortitza built a theatre in front of and a clubhouse beside another Mennonite church in order to spy on parishioners entering through the church doors. Another group commandeered the grounds of this church and used them as a sports playing field.[182] Of course, Mennonite congregations whose churches were confiscated were never compensated for their loss of property. As was the case with their land, livestock, machinery, and other personal property, Mennonites were expected to surrender their churches voluntarily for the advancement and benefit of socialism and atheism in the country.

The closure of Mennonite churches and the subsequent prohibition of church services and meetings in many areas populated by Mennonites accelerated the destruction of the Mennonite community in Ukraine and the Crimea -- a community whose understanding of peoplehood was intimately linked to religious practice and custom. By the end of 1933 many of the old forms of Mennonite worship -- Sunday services, baptisms, prayer meetings, Bible studies, weddings, and funerals -- no longer prevailed in a large number of the regions with Mennonite settlements. The disintegration of the traditional religious and cultural elements that formerly united Mennonite communities naturally encouraged some Mennonites to leave the religious fold in the early 1930s. The only places where the remnants of traditional Mennonite religious practice and culture continued to exist were in the homes of individual Mennonite families, particularly in those collective farms where strict rules prohibiting the public expression of religious services were scrupulously enforced.[183]

There were some, albeit very few, village soviets and collectives which did not close down local Mennonite churches and which gave their Mennonite members some limited freedom to practice their religious faith. Rarely could one locate a church which still had a minister who had not already been imprisoned, exiled, or executed. When a congregation no longer had its pastor, it was up to the elders and laymen to lead the church services. Attendance at Sunday services and religious events remained relatively high in some communities in the early 1930s, despite the fact that local collective farm members were routinely required to work on Sundays and religious holidays. Church services in Memrik [Selydove] and Olgafeld (Fürstenland [Rohachyk]), for instance, were often full; the church at Olgafeld had as many as two services on some Sundays. Even some Chortitza churches enjoyed a large number of visitors (mostly women), particularly during the Christmas season.[184] State-sanctioned public holidays (such as May Day, October celebration, or Women's Day) often could not compete in popularity with religious holidays. At a Christmas service in 1930, for example, one Chortitza Mennonite church was almost full. The only area in the church where there was space to sit was in the pews reserved for Mennonite men, some of whom refused to attend because they feared that they would lose their food rations if they were seen in church. At the Christmas service in 1932, however, the church was filled to capacity. Similarly, there was standing room only at the Christmas service in Neu-Chortitza (Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka]) in 1930 and at the Christmas service at a church near Memrik [Selydove] in 1931.[185] Despite the possible risks and punishments associated with attending a Sunday or holiday worship service, collectivized Mennonites -- mainly Mennonite women -- continued to participate in religious services.

High attendance figures were recorded at other religious functions in villages which had not outlawed all forms of religious worship. In Fürstenwerder (Molotschna), Lichtenau (Molotschna), Landskrone (Molotschna), Alexandertal (Molotschna), Ohrloff (Molotschna), and villages in the Sagradowka region, for example, Bible studies in private homes were regularly held to provide spiritual strength and a sense of community fellowship among collectivized Mennonites. These Bible studies became especially important to Mennonites in villages such as Lichtfeld (Molotschna), where regular church services were not permitted. Regularly held prayer meetings also provided spiritual consolation and a sense of community for the collectivized Mennonites in Ohrloff (Molotschna) and in the Sagradowka area.[186] Perhaps the most celebratory religious events that collectivized Mennonites experienced at this time were the baptismal ceremonies that demonstrated the continuing viability of the Christian faith in a very hostile, anti-religious environment. In summer or winter, in warm lakes or frozen rivers, recent converts were baptized into Mennonite congregations. By the summer of 1930, for example, 127 people were reportedly baptized in 2 Mennonite churches in Chortitza. At a baptismal gathering in Memrik [Selydove], 38 people were baptized, while at least 56 people joined the local church at Mennonite baptisms in Landskrone (Molotschna) in 1931. In 1932, there were at least 30 people baptized at one ceremony in Osterwick (Chortitza), and as many as 22 people were baptized on one occasion in Rosental (Chortitza) in the early summer of 1933.[187] Such examples of religious conviction indicated the continued presence and growth of the Christian faith in Mennonite communities, notwithstanding government attempts to eradicate it.

In this respect, there were positive developments for Mennonite congregations during this period of religious persecution. Public ridicule and the possibility of dekulakization forced Mennonites who were previously "lukewarm" in the faith either to make a stronger commitment to their faith or to renounce it altogether. Although some Mennonite fellowships saw a significant decrease in their membership rolls, others saw dramatic increases in the number of baptisms, especially among Mennonite youth. Moreover, religious persecution compelled more Mennonite men and women to assume greater responsibility for their spiritual welfare and to discard those religious traditions and practices that were irrelevant. Circumstances compelled thousands of Mennonites to establish individual religious fellowships which better addressed their own peculiar spiritual needs and wants.

Furthermore, the exile of Mennonite ministers to the gulags allowed Mennonite laymen to assume leadership roles in the fellowships. In many communities it was the Mennonite women who rose to the occasion and assumed responsibility for the spiritual welfare of their families by organizing and leading prayer meetings, baptisms, and worship services in their homes -- religious events which traditionally were organized and presided over by Mennonite men. Mennonite women often proved to be the strongest defenders of the faith and as a result played a much more overt role in the spiritual leadership of

Mennonite fellowships than they had previously.

At the same time, however, the government's attack on Mennonite churches had consequences that crippled the long-term viability of the Mennonite congregations. First, the government destroyed the formal structure and organization of Mennonite denominations across Ukraine and the Crimea. The taxation and closure of Mennonite churches and associations meant there was little opportunity for congregations to work together on common objectives that would strengthen the Mennonite presence in the region. Second, the government decapitated the very powerful and influential religious leadership of the Soviet Mennonite community. The dekulakization and exile of Mennonite ministers and religious leaders created a power vacuum in most Mennonite settlements which local authorities filled with their own handpicked bureaucrats. Third, the government prevented any organized demonstration of Mennonite resistance to collectivization as had occurred in the autumn of 1929 in the trek to Moscow. Acts of resistance were largely limited to congregations collecting monies to pay the taxes of their ministers, and to individual acts of defiance such as self-dekulakization. And finally, the government's creation of an atmosphere of distrust and anxiety within the countryside drove Mennonite religious practice underground. The real possibility of betrayal by neighbours and friends naturally compelled Mennonites to restrict their expression of Mennonite faith to secret household prayer meetings, worship services, and baptismal services. In such an atmosphere, the majority of Mennonite congregations remained clandestine and isolated from each other, unaware of each other's existence, needs, and suffering.

Punishing the Non-Conformists

The pertinacity with which some Mennonites clung to their traditional religious beliefs and resisted the government's anti-religious campaigns also motivated other Mennonites to resist government policy and directives in matters other than religion. It was usually Mennonite women who demonstrated the most courage in standing up to local officials and demanding that their complaints be taken seriously. This was the case in Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]) in 1930 when a number of Mennonite women refused to join the local collective despite threats from authorities. According to the local state-sponsored newspaper, Das Neue Dorf, the women refused to join because they had been detrimentally influenced by kulaks who advised the women that their children would be abducted by the state once they signed on as collective farm members.[188] Female resistance also occurred in Liebenau (Molotschna). In the spring of 1932, local officials planned to expropriate and put into the collective farm livestock stalls the last remaining cows that collective farm households had previously been allowed to keep for their private use. When the women on the collective got wind of this scheme they threatened to revolt and cause no end of trouble. Realizing that the women were not bluffing, the officials gave in to their demands and allowed each household to keep its cow. A similar set of events unfolded at the Franzfeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]) collective in 1932. Local authorities planned to expropriate all of the privately owned livestock belonging to collective farm members. After the authorities moved the livestock into collective farm stalls several women went to these stalls, claimed the cows that belonged to them, and brought them back home. Although the authorities threatened to punish the women if they did not immediately return the animals, the women refused to comply. In the end, the authorities decided not to take any retributive action against the women, and permitted each family to keep one cow for its own private use.[189] In standing up to collective officials in such a defiant manner, these Mennonite women demonstrated to government authorities that they could not always expect to ride roughshod over those considered to be the weaker sex.

Some exhibitions of defiance, however, backfired in the faces of Mennonite non-conformists, resulting in severe sentences of punishment. There were officials who had no inhibitions about summarily evicting, imprisoning, exiling, or executing collectivized Mennonites who were rightly or wrongly accused of unlawful resistance or fomenting a revolt. Similar types of punishment were also routinely handed out to collectivized Mennonites who were blamed for any accident or misfortune that befell a collective farm. Regardless of whether or not they were responsible, Mennonites accused of causing problems on the collectives were usually charged with the offence of "wrecking," branded as saboteurs or kulaks, and punished. This was the experience of Mennonite members of the Gnadenfeld (Molotschna) collective farm where shortages of fodder during the winter of 1931-1932 resulted in the loss of large numbers of horses and other livestock. It did not take long for collective farm officials to find scapegoats -- namely collectivized and non-collectivized Mennonites -- to blame for the losses. To set a good example for the others, Gnadenfeld officials evicted the alleged Mennonite wreckers from the collective and exiled a number of them to Siberian work camps.[190] A similar fate befell a Mennonite woman from the *Kalinin* collective in the Sagradowka region. When a fire on the collective destroyed 450 poods of barley seed, straw, and chaff (worth 4,465 rubles) in 1932, local officials blamed the woman for causing it, and subsequently ordered that she be shot. In the Memrik [Selydove] region, collectivized and non-collectivized Mennonites were blamed and punished for the financial collapse of a collective farm that was unable to remain in operation.[191] Reluctant to assume any responsibility themselves, collective farm officials were always quick to find someone else as the culprit for their problems.

Collective farm officials were also quick to inflict punishment on Mennonites who were accused of committing minor offenses on the collective farm, such as sleeping on the job, abandoning their post, or mishandling collective livestock. Branded as saboteurs, speculators, kulaks, or hooligans, Mennonites accused of wrongdoing had their names, misdeeds, and punishments published in the local newspapers for public ridicule.[192] There was no consistency, however, with respect to the punishment meted out for an alleged offence. On some collectives, Mennonites who came to work late, complained too often about their living or working conditions, or refused to work on Sundays and holidays received a relatively light monetary fine or a small deduction in wages. At the Blumenstein (Molotschna) collective, for instance, a Mennonite accused of temporarily abandoning his work station for a short period of time was fined 10 rubles by his peers in the collective; in Rosenort (Molotschna) those who refused to show up for work or stayed at home had a number of work days deducted from their employment record. At the Liebenau (Molotschna) collective any person caught coming to work 20 minutes late received a 25% decrease in his or her wages over the following 6 months.[193] Authorities at the Chatajewitsch collective in the Chortitza colony deducted 3 work units from the work record of a Mennonite worker accused of mishandling the farm's horses; his case was also published in the local newspaper. At other collectives, on the other hand, offences similar to those noted above could result in eviction, imprisonment, exile, or execution. A Mennonite in the Tiege (Molotschna) collective who was accused of mishandling the cattle was threatened with eviction from the collective if he did not improve his performance. Arrest and incarceration was the punishment for a tractor operator from the Molotschna colony who refused to work on Sundays. Mennonites who had lied about their identity, who were considered to have exploited peasants prior to the Russian Revolution, who were absent without leave from the collective farm, or who failed to pay their income taxes were also severely punished by local authorities. In Tiege (Molotschna) a number of members were evicted from the village collective when it was discovered that some of them had used false documents to gain entrance into the collective and that others had hired peasants to work for them before the

Bolshevik Revolution. Similarly, a bookkeeper from the Pordenau (Molotschna) collective was sentenced to 4 years in prison after he failed to pay his taxes. Harsh forms of punishment were also meted out to collectivized Mennonites in Osterwick (Chortitza) who were accused of concealing the identity of a clergyman who was in their work brigade. When collective leaders learned of the clergyman's true identity, they evicted him from the collective and then doubled the work quotas and increased the taxes of the other brigade members. The brigade was later punished again for the same offence, despite having exceeded its increased work quota by 250%. To ease their consciences, authorities sometimes forced the accused offenders to petition fellow collective farm members to determine what punishment was appropriate for their wrongdoing.[194]

Officials also used the courts to obtain government sanction for handing down more severe punishments. Sometimes referred to as the People's Court, local courts heard both petty and serious criminal cases, usually without legal counsel present and without any opportunity for the accused to cross-examine the statements of his or her detractors. Occasionally, Mennonites sat as judges or provided testimonies against other Mennonites accused of various offences against the state, thus ensuring that a conviction would result. Seldom did the sentences handed down by the courts bear any relation to the gravity of the offences. At the *Chatajewitsch* collective in the Chortitza colony , for example, a Mennonite woman who was convicted of taking a flask of milk from the collective farm dairy had 5 work days deducted from her employment record and had her case published in the newspaper Stürmer.[195] A Mennonite from a Yazykovo [Lukashivka] collective was required to confess his wrongdoing publicly to other members of the collective when he was caught with a pound of rye in his pockets after working on the fields. Not all misdemeanours were dealt with as lightly, however. Expulsion from the collective farm was the sentence imposed on a Mennonite woman in Rosenort (Molotschna) who was accused of taking some milk without permission. Similar threats of punishment were used by the Münsterberg (Molotschna) village soviet to prevent collective farm members from pilfering grain and sunflower supplies. Officials at a Sagradowka collective went even further when they initially ordered the execution of a Mennonite accused of stealing 22.5 poods of wheat and 6 poods of maize; later, however, they granted the accused some leniency and commuted his death sentence to a 10-year period of disenfranchisement.[196]

Mennonites who rose up through the ranks and acquired important administrative positions in the collectives farms were not automatically exempt from being implicated as wreckers and saboteurs. Some Mennonites who attained such influential posts as brigade leader or collective farm chairman found themselves ridiculed in the local newspapers, fined for committing various antisocialist offences, and in some cases expelled from the collective and subsequently imprisoned, exiled, or sentenced to death for their alleged crimes. A Mennonite brigade leader from a collective near Franzfeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), for instance, was condemned to 2 years of forced labour because he failed to give local officials a small amount of grain that he found on a barn floor where his brigade was threshing. A far worse fate befell a Mennonite who was the administrator of a collective in the Sagradowka region; local officials decided to have him shot after he was accused of pilfering 12 centners and 16 kilograms of grain.[197] Justice was swift and often indiscriminate when it dealt with the enemies of the Soviet Union.

Indiscriminate arrests and the absence of fundamental principles of justice in the local courts contributed to and prolonged the atmosphere of terror and instability in the Mennonite countryside during the early 1930s. No one, not even Mennonite administrators and authorities, were immune to becoming the victim of trumped up charges and kangaroo court justice. As a result, a perpetual state of fear and anxiety plagued most collectivized Mennonites -- a psychological state of terror that prevented most from voicing their opinions, challenging the decisions of local officials, or coming to the aid of others. The few Mennonites who overcame this state of terror and publicly challenged local authorities were usually Mennonite women who put their lives on the line to protect their families. Such acts of defiance were infrequent, however, and the participants were often punished.

That so many collectivized Mennonites were expelled from collectives, exiled, or imprisoned is evidence that local authorities implemented a policy of routinely dekulakizing the collective farm population. The ongoing dekulakization of Mennonite collective farm members minimized the occurrence of large scale acts of resistance and helped to ensure the demise of the traditional Mennonite way of life and the ongoing compliance of Mennonite members to continue to work for the state. The policy also ensured the removal of those Mennonites who were viewed as potential rivals or threats to local officials. In such an environment it was impossible for Mennonites to organize any political or religious associations which in any way rivalled the Soviet state.

Conclusion

If dekulakization wrought the final destruction of the economic, social, political, and religious institutions of the Mennonite colonies, then collectivization was the process which forcibly integrated Soviet Mennonites into the larger Ukrainian and Russian community and required them to live in new institutions imposed by the state. For the first time in their 250-year history in Russia and the Soviet Union, Mennonites were no longer a distinct, united people who could determine their own destiny or retain their own sense of identity and peoplehood. Soviet collectivization dictated virtually every aspect of Mennonite life in the countryside, resulting in the disappearance of traditions and characteristics that had previously distinguished the Mennonites as a unique ethnic minority. This enabled the Soviet government to fracture the Soviet Mennonite community into dislocated groups of individuals who no longer shared a common future~~, but only~~ memories of a common past.

Collectivization imposed a new economic, social, and political order in the countryside which left most Mennonites bewildered and vulnerable. Within the space of a few months, and in some cases a few weeks, thousands of Mennonite families in Ukraine and the Crimea who had not been dekulakized were ordered to surrender their land, livestock, homes, and machinery to local authorities and join collective farms. Collectivization stripped Mennonites of their economic privileges and status, reduced many of them to live at the same subsistence level as the poorest Ukrainian and Russian peasants, and forced the majority into indentured servitude to the Soviet state. In short, Mennonites were no longer the masters of their farms or their communities.

Forced integration into the larger Ukrainian and Russian population also diluted the social and ethnic uniqueness of the Mennonite community. Working in collectives with Ukrainian and Russian members and sharing their homes and property with non-Mennonite peasants, collectivized Mennonites were pressured to forget and often forbidden to practice their Mennonite religious, educational, and cultural practices and traditions. Instead, they were required to attend state-sponsored political and cultural classes where they learned the ABC's of socialism, atheism, and the Ukrainian and Russian languages. Although there were more opportunities for collectivized Mennonites to retain their religious faith, cultural traditions and German language in collective farms that were predominantly populated by Mennonites, the executive committees of these "Mennonite collectives" closely monitored and often prohibited Mennonite religious and cultural practices in their communities out of fear that they would be accused of promoting the practices of a formerly prosperous religious minority to the detriment of state-sanctioned cultural, educational, and anti-religious programs. Collectivized Mennonites were publicly forced to abandon their own cultural and religious practices in favour of those sanctioned by the Soviet state (Communist holidays, anti-Christmas and anti-Easter celebrations, Pioneer and Komsomol programs).

This is not to say that all Mennonite cultural and religious practices were completely extinguished during collectivization. During the early 1930s, Mennonite families continued to practice their religious faith and culture, albeit privately within the confines of their homes. They held secret prayer meetings, bible studies, and worship services out of sight of the collective farm executive, taught Bible verses to their children in the German language, and occasionally held baptismal services when it was safe to do so. It was generally the Mennonite women who took charge of inculcating their children with the principles of their religious faith and traditions; Mennonite women, many of whose husbands, fathers, brothers and sons had already been imprisoned, exiled or executed, played new leadership roles within their communities. In some collectivized communities, Mennonites were granted limited privileges to hold religious services; there were also villages which allowed Mennonite congregations to put on Christmas and Easter services as late as 1931 and 1932. By holding such religious services, speaking German to their children, and celebrating traditional Mennonite holidays, collectivized Mennonites could find some continuity with their past in a hostile world which had destroyed so much of their community. Observing these religious, educational, and cultural practices was one way for collectivized Mennonites to deal with the radical changes taking place around them. It also provided an outlet for private resistance against the new cultural, educational, social, and anti-religious mores imposed from above by the Soviet regime.

Not every Mennonite, however, vehemently opposed Stalin's social engineering and collectivization programs. Mennonites who were without land or property, disenchanted with their community, or persuaded by Soviet propaganda often jumped at the opportunity to fill positions of authority within the collectives farm executive committees and the local government bureaucracy. These Mennonites who volunteered their services to the regime were fewer in number, however, than those Mennonites who were coerced to work for the government because of the ever-present threat that they or their families might be dekulakized if they did not support the government. Regardless of what motivated Mennonites to work for the government, it cannot be denied that collectivization facilitated the emergence of a new social and political hierarchy in Mennonite-populated regions. The members of this hierarchy, which included Mennonites, Ukrainians, Russians, Germans and Jews, were rarely selected for their business savvy, farming know-how, political experience, or religious piety; rather, they were chosen because they ostensibly represented the interests of the poorest members of the community, were members of the Communist party, or were willing to toe the party line at whatever personal cost. With such criteria often determining the selection process, the new secular political leadership of the early 1930s did not inspire the same kind of respect and sense of legitimacy from their Mennonite constituents that was given to former Mennonite leaders of the 1920s.

What is surprising is that so many Mennonites filled positions on the collective farm executives, the local MTS, and government-sponsored agencies which administered the collective farm operations. In many of the predominantly Mennonite-populated collectives, Mennonites filled every position of the executive, making decisions that determined the success or failure of the collectives. These executive members were also responsible for determining which of their Mennonite neighbours and relatives would be allowed to become collective farm members, what their living arrangements, food rations, and work duties would be, and when they would be expelled or exiled for inexcusable conduct. Such decision-making authority often did not win the support or favour of ordinary collectivized Mennonite members. At the same time, Mennonite executive members who were accused of crimes against the state (i.e. poor performance, nepotism, or sympathizing with the kulak cause) were summarily vilified in the local newspapers and immediately expelled from their positions. It is not surprising that Mennonites who performed administrative functions in the collective farms often felt distrusted by and isolated from their coreligionists, who were suspicious of anyone who worked for the regime, and a state bureaucracy which was seldom satisfied with the efforts undertaken by the executive members of collective farms and which was even less forgiving of those who failed to accomplish the unreasonable quotas and tax levies imposed on the collectives.

Other Mennonites had higher political ambitions. As members of the MTS, Communist Party, ECDS, and other state agencies, Mennonites were involved in various capacities in implementing collectivization programs in their respective jurisdictions. They participated in the decision-making process at Communist party cell meetings, made their opinions known in village and regional soviets, and passed resolutions at committee meetings of various local government agencies. They determined what tax levies would be imposed on various collectives, selected which Mennonites teachers would lose or keep their positions, and acted as judges at the people's court where they punished, exiled and imprisoned collectivized Mennonites accused of sabotaging collective farm operations.

What is important to recognize is that Mennonites were not left out of the collectivization process; Mennonites played an important role in determining how collectivization would occur within their colonies, who would be positively and negatively affected by the process, and how the new political, social, and economic institutions would take shape and influence the communities. It is therefore naive to believe that Mennonites were only passive participants in the socialization the countryside: for better or worse, Mennonites who worked for the state must receive some of the credit and some the blame for what happened during the collectivization of their colonies.

The majority of Mennonites, however, had no say in local politics, bureaucratic decisions, or the administration of collective farms. Most were ordinary members of collective farms who worked as labourers, doing their best to eke out an existence for themselves and their families. This was no easy task, and it became progressively more difficult as each year went by. That more Mennonites did not suffer premature death is due in large part to the food and money that came from friends and relatives in North America and Europe. Yet despite the enormous generosity provided by Mennonites in the West during the early 1930s, it was not enough to prevent the suffering caused during the famine of 1932-1933. How the Soviet Mennonite community responded to this crisis will be discussed in the following chapter.

Endnotes for Chapter III

1. "Письма граждан на имя И. В. Сталина в ЦК КП/б/У...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3145, pp. 1ff; Viola, Peasant Rebels Under Stalin, pp. 21ff.

2. Davies, The Socialist Offensive, pp. 442f; "Листування з райвиконкомами про хід колективізації в національних районах... 1930," ЦДАВОВ:413/1/419; "Bestimmung des Zentralvollzugskomitees...." ГАЗО:235/1/730, pp. 243ff;

3. "Проекты постановлений Оргбюро...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/ 3153, pp. 1ff; "Хлебозаготовительная кампания на Украине...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3142, pp. 87ff; "До всіх РПК...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3142, pp. 120ff. In explaining the difference between the *kommuna*, *artel* and *toz*, M. Lewin notes that:

> ...The *kommuna* worked on egalitarian principles of distribution; families left their cottages and lived in rooms allocated to them in communal living quarters; everyone ate in a communal refectory; in principle, the children were brought up and educated by the *kommuna*.
>
> In the *artel*, collectivization did not extend to housing or consumption. Family life retained its private character, as it had before. Land was held in common, except for a small strip attached to the house.... In principle all important implements, and draught animals, and occasionally either all or some of the cows, were communally owned....
>
> In the *toz* either all or part of the land was held in common ownership, and communally divided. In the majority of cases, income was distributed in accordance with the size of each peasant's holding. It was rare for livestock and the majority of the farm implements to be collectivized, but the heaviest and most expensive machines, which the individual farmer could not afford, were owned communally.

Lewin, Russian Peasants and Soviet Power, pp. 110f.

4. Dmytro Zlepko, ed., Der ukrainische Hunger-Holocaust: Stalins verschwiegener Völkermord 1932/33 an 7 Millionen ukrainischen Bauern im Spiegel geheimgehaltener Akten des deutschen Auswärtigen Amtes (Sonnenbühl: Verlag Helmut Wild, 1988), p. 17; Davies, The Socialist Offensive, pp. 442f.

5. "Справка о состоянии коллективизации на Украине...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/II/3153, pp. 53ff; Davies, The Socialist Offensive, pp. 442f.

6. "Докладные записки...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/III/5286, pp. 8ff; Viola, Peasant Rebels Under Stalin, pp. 27ff.

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113. "Протокол № 2...." ГАЗО:235/1/801, p. 17; "Список пенсіонерів Хортицького району...." ГАЗО:235/1/801, pp. 23ff; "Liste der Pfleglinge im Ohrloffer Altenheim...." ГАЗО:3452/1/45, p. 8; "Liste der Invaliden des Chortitzer Rayons," ГАЗО:235/1/801, p. 70.

114. "An den Rayonsinspektor...." ГАЗО:235/1/801, pp. 62, 64f, 70; "Chortitzer Hilfs-Komitee...." ГАЗО:235/1/801, p. 63.

115. "Plan Durchführung des 12-ten Jahrestages der Roten Armee...." ГАЗО:235/2/56, p. 5; "Akt...." ГАЗО:235/1/766, p. 130; "Die Einlager Leserhalle...." ГАЗО:235/2/62a, pp. 61f.

116. "An alle Leiter...." ГАЗО:235/2/65, pp. 10, 110; "Orientierungs-Plan Arbeit...." ГАЗО:235/2/61, pp. 7, 13ff; "Bericht über die Arbeit...." ГАЗО:235/2/62a, pp. 56ff.

117. "Auftrag...." ОЗоКПУ:286/73/251, pp. 47ff, 93ff, 159ff; "Wie unsere Arbeit bezahlt wird," DB, 13 May 1931, p. 4.

118. "Friedensruhe, Molotschna," DB, 23 December 1931, p. 3; "Benennung der Arbeit...." ГАЗО:1429/1/20, pp. 60ff; "Protokoll № 30...." ГАЗО:1429/1/12, p. 92.

119. Rempel, Liebenau, pp. 142f; "Alle in den Kampf fuer die Entfaltung der Kulturmassenarbeit!" ST, 18 Januar 1934, p. 2; "Die Arbeitstage werden unnütz verausgabt," ST, 5 April 1934, p. 2; "Arbeitstage, die nie verdient wurden," ST, 16 September 1934, p. 2.

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121. "Відомість...." ГАЗО:3952/1/20, pp. 263ff; Unruh, "Bericht XXIV," March 1931, p. 2; "Мал. Райспабу...." ГАЗО:1429/1/35, pp. 156f; "Список...." ГАЗО:1429/1/35, pp. 165, 197; "Ueber die Lohnsätze der Traktoristen.... " ST, 24 März 1934, p. 1; "Über die Selbstbesteuerung der Dorfbevölkerung," ST, 18 Juni 1934, p. 2.

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123. "Aus der Ukraine," DB, 14 May 1930, p. 4; "Auszüge aus dem Briefe eines mennonitischen Lehrers in Russland," DB, 17 February 1932, p. 5.

124. Görz, Memrik, p. 77; "Chortitza," CGWD:146/1/238-460.

125. "Blumengart (Chortitza)," CGWD:146/1/159-188; "Molotschnaja," MR, 25 February 1931, pp. 6f; "Friedensfeld," MR, 10 February 1932, p. 6.

126. "Chortitza," CGWD:146/1/238-460; "Friedensfeld (Nikopol)," CGWD:146/1/533-570.

127. "Chortitza," CGWD:146/1/238-460; "Steinau (Nikopol)," CGWD:150/4/680-721; "Liste der durchschnittlichen Monats-gage der Arbeiter.... " ГАЗО:1429/1/29, p. 27.

128. "Chortitza," CGWD:146/1/238-460.

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130. "Süd-Russland," MR, 11 March 1931, p. 9; "Einlage am Dnjepr," DB, 22 October 1930, p. 3.

131. "Unsere wahre Lage," DB, 7 January 1931, p. 3; "Eine Brief aus Russland," ZB, 9 April 1930, pp. 12f; J. Janzen, "Eine Schilderung aus dem Leben der Schwarzmeerdeutschen im Gebiet Molotschna (Ukraine)," 16 March 1944, Centre of Mennonite Brethren Studies in Canada. Winnipeg, Manitoba, pp. 3.

132. "Trauriger Brief aus Russland," MR, 8 April 1931, p. 7; "Aus einem Briefe aus Osterwick, Südrussland," DB, 10 June 1931, p. 4.

133. "Blumenort, Russland," MR, 30 March 1932, p. 6; "Chortitza," CGWD:146/1/238-460.

134. "Blumenfeld (Nikopol)," CGWD:152/7/273-301; "Burwalde (Chortitza)," CGWD: 146/1/189-237; "Einlage (Chortitza)," CGWD:152/7/107-193; "Franzfeld (Chortitza)," CGWD:150/4/477-516; "Hochfeld (Chortitza)," CGWD:147/1/640-673; "Neuendorf (Chortitza)," CGWD:150/4/517-585; "Neuhorst (Chortitza)," CGWD:150/4/586-604; "Rosengart (Chortitza)," CGWD:148/2/450-486.

135. "Ein Brief aus dem Gouv. Woronesh," DB, 6 May 1931, p. 4; "Von der Memriker Ansiedlung," DB, 11 November 1931, p. 4; "Blumengart (Chortitza)," CGWD:146/1/159-188; "Ein Brief aus Blumengart, Chortitzer Rayon," DB, 9 September 1931, p. 4; "Kurze Auszüge aus Briefen aus der Ukraine," DB, 18 February 1931, p. 3; "Süd-Russland," MR, 12 August 1931, p. 4; "Wir schreiten stark dem Hunger entgegen," DB, 29 April 1931, p. 4.

136. "Auszüge aus einem Briefe eines Lehrers in Süd- Russland," DB, 29 March 1933, p. 5; "Burwalde," MR, 28 December 1932, p. 6; "Waldheim," MR, 11 January 1933, p. 7.

137. "Protokoll...." ГАЗО:3452/1/18, pp. 147ff; "Chortitza," CGWD:146/1/238-460; "Blumenfeld (Nikopol)," CGWD:152/7/273-301; "Friedensfeld (Nikopol)," CGWD:146/1/533-570; "Steinau (Nikopol)," CGWD:150/4/680-721.

138. "Rosenort (Kronau)," CGWD:148/3/487-527; "Blumenfeld," MR, 6 April 1932, p. 6.

139. "Ausländisches," MR, 15 February 1933, pp. 6f; "An alle früheren Fürstenländer," DB, 15 February 1933, p. 2; Loewen, Jasykowo, p. 86.

140. "Protokoll №...." ГАЗО:3452/1/9, pp. 67, 112; "Grünfeld (Kriwoj-Rog)," CGWD:150/5/286-351; "Gnadental (Safiewka)," CGWD:147/1/572- 622; "Chortitza," CGWD:146/1/238-460; "Friedensfeld (Nikopol)," CGWD:146/1/533-570.

141. "Blumenfeld (Nikopol)," CGWD:152/7/273-301; "Hochfeld (Kriwoj-Rog)," CGWD:150/5/352-383; "Protokoll...." ГАЗО:3452/1/9, pp. 126, 133, 138; "Auftrag...." ОЗоКПУ:286/73/251, pp. 47ff, 93ff.

142. "Protokoll № 41...." ГАЗО:3452/1/6, pp. 57f; "Protokoll № 23...." ГАЗО:3452/1/25, p. 155.

143. "Kronsweide am Dnjepr," DB, 29 July 1931, p. 4.

144. "An das Rayonsvollzugskomitee," ГАЗО:235/1/789, p. 2; "Nachrichten aus Chortitza, Südrussland," DB, 25 March 1931, pp. 3f; "Protokoll...." ГАЗО:1429/1/40, pp. 7ff.

145. "Nachrichten aus Chortitza, Ukraine," DB, 4 March 1931, p. 3; "Aus einem Briefe aus Osterwick, Südrussland," DB, 10 June 1931, p. 4.

146. "Protokoll No.12...." ГАЗО:3452/1/18, p. 146; "Auszug aus einem Brief aus Russland," DB, 20 August 1930, p. 3; "Allerlei aus Schönwiese bei Alexandrowsk," DB, 4 February 1931, p. 3.

147. "Ein Brief aus dem Gouv. Woronesh," DB, 6 May 1931, p. 4; "Chortitza, den 3. Februar 1932," DB, 16 March 1932, p. 5; "Молочанский район...." ОЗоКПУ:286/22/5, pp. 11f.

148. "Auszug aus einem Briefe aus Spat (Krim)," DB, 9 September 1931, p. 4; "Nachrichten aus Chortitza, Ukraine," DB, 16 September 1931, p. 4.

149. "Aufbau?" MR, 17 February 1932, p. 11; "Neu York, Russland," MR, 23 November 1932, p. 6; "Bulgarische Gäste im Artel `Chatajewitsch,'" ST, 12 Juli 1934, p. 2.

150. "Aus der Ukraine," DB, 12 August 1931, p. 4.

151. "Bilder aus Chortitza," DB, 26 July 1933, pp. 3f; Unruh, "Bericht XLII," 17 February 1932, pp. 12ff; "Молочанский район...." ОЗоКПУ:286/167/3, p. 2.

152. "Sende einige Auszüge aus russlandischen Briefen zur Veröffentlichung...." MR, 15 July 1931, p. 7; "Aus der Molotschna," DB, 23 September 1931, p. 4.

153. "Aus einem Briefe aus Osterwick, Südrussland," DB, 10 June 1931, p. 4; "Wir schreiten stark dem Hunger entgegen," DB, 29 April 1931, p. 4; "Chortitza, Ukraine," DB, 18 May 1930, p. 4.

154. These statistics are from the CGWD. The villages from which the statistics are derived are Adelsheim, Blumengart, Burwalde, Chortitza, Einlage, Franzfeld, Hochfeld, Kronstal, Kronsweide, Neuendorf, Neuenberg, Neuhorst, Nieder-Chortitza, Nikolaifeld, Osterwick, Rosenbach, Rosengart, Schöneberg, and Schönhorst. See "Chortitza," CGWD:146/1/238-460.

155. The 23 villages in the Piatykhatky (Schlachtin-Baratov) region that are discussed in the CGWD are Blumenhof, Christoforowka, Ebenfeld, Eigengrund, Felsenbach, Freileben, Friesendorf, Heuboden, Katharinenhof, Lenintal, Neu-Anlage, Neudorf, Neu-Hochstadt, Nikolaital, Ordshonikidse, Rosenfeld, Rosental, Schöndorf, Sterndorf, Gnadental, Katerinowka, Neu-Chortitza, and Rotfeld. See "Pjatichatki," CGWD:150/5/1-39.

156. "Відомості...." ГАЗО:235/2/58; "До всіх райвиконкомів...." ГАЗО:235/2/62, p. 25; "Akt...." ГАЗО:235/1/766; "Daten für den Dorfrat...." ГАЗО:235/1/766, pp. 217ff, 223ff.

157. "Список учителей Молочанского района на 1929/30...." ГАЗО:3452/1/11, pp. 1ff; "Анкета...." ГАЗО:3452/1/11; "Справка," ГАЗО:235/2/63, p. 104.

158. "An alle Schulen...." ГАЗО:235/2/64, p. 17; "Выводы...." ГАЗО:235/2/64, p. 71; "До районових Виконавчих Комітетів," ГАЗО:235/2/64, p. 117; "Проект укомплектування Райінспектури...." ОЗоКПУ:1/1179/49, p. 15; "Protokoll №...." ГАЗО: 235/2/54, pp. 1ff, 7ff, 13ff; "Ведомость об учителях школ Хортицкого района...." ГАЗО:235/2/56, p. 26; "An alle Schulen...." ГАЗО:235/2/65, p. 23.

159. "... Kollektivverwaltungen Blumstein...." ГАЗО:2953/1/2, p. 112; "Liste der Kinder...." ГАЗО:235/2/55, p. 15; "Protokoll № 34...." ГАЗО:3452/1/7, p. 18.

160. "Bericht über die Arbeit...." ГАЗО:235/2/60, pp. 125, 130f; "Jahresbericht...." ГАЗО:235/2/62a, pp. 18ff; "Тема...." ГАЗО:235/2/62, pp. 38ff, 43f; "Весняна... кампанія...." ГАЗО:235/2/62, pp. 53, 64ff, 68ff.

161. An das Chortitzaer R.V.K...." ГАЗО:235/2/64, p. 140; "An die Rayonsinspektor, Chortitza...." ГАЗО:235/2/64, p. 141.

162. "До Хортицького інспектора...." ГАЗО:235/2/65, pp. 82; "Daten über die Kinder...." ГАЗО:235/2/65, p. 89; "Liste der Kinder...." ГАЗО:235/2/65, p. 91; "Liste der Batraka Kinder...." ГАЗО:235/2/65, p. 97; "Список...." ГАЗО:235/2/58, p. 71; "... Gen. Ens!...." ГАЗО:235/2/63, p. 92f.

163. "Protokoll № 47...." ГАЗО:3452/1/6, p. 76; "Akt ...." ГАЗО:235/1/766, pp. 121ff; "Abrechnungsbericht...." ГАЗО:235/2/62a, p. 7; "Річний звіт," ГАЗО:235/2/62a, pp. 36f.

164. "Protokoll No...." ГАЗО:3452/1/28, pp. 112ff; "Акт 1930...." ГАЗО:235/1/766, pp. 10ff, 63ff; "An das Chortitzer Rayonvollzugskomitee," ГАЗО:235/1/787, p. 135; "Aus dem Rosental bei Chortitza," DB, 16 December 1931, p. 4.

165. "Neuendorf (Chortitza)," CGWD:150/4/517-585; "An alle Schulen...." ГАЗО:235/2/65, pp. 119f; "An alle Schulen," ГАЗО:235/2/64, p. 156; "Навчальний план," ГАЗО:235/2/64, pp. 171ff; "Номенклатура," ГАЗО:235/2/64 p. 176.

166. "Jahresbericht...." ГАЗО:235/2/62a, pp. 18ff; "An die Rayonsinspektor für Bildungswesen...." ГАЗО:235/2/62, pp. 27ff; "III Gruppe...." ГАЗО:235/2/ 62, p. 36; "Plan der 2 Gruppe der Rosentaler Arbeitsschule...." ГАЗО:235/2/62, p. 35; "Komplexthema: 'Die Frühlingsaussaat u. Arbeit auf dem Dorfe'...." ГАЗО:235/2/62, pp. 54ff.

167. "Protokoll №...." ГАЗО:235/2/54, pp. 1ff, 13ff; "Protokoll №...." ГАЗО:3452/1/6, p. 34; "Auszüge aus dem Briefe...." DB, 17 February 1932, p. 5.

168. "An das Chortitzer R.V.K...." ГАЗО:235/2/147, p. 18; "An alle D/R...." ГАЗО: 235/2/147, p. 26; "An alle Leiter der Bauernheim u. Lesenhallen," ГАЗО:235/2/65, p. 110; "Beschluss des Büro des Halbstädter RPK...." ОЗоКПУ:286/32/3, pp. 10f; "KPP...

Nicolaipoler Bauernheim," ГАЗО:235/2/56, p. 2.

169. "План проведення 3-х дневных курсов...." ГАЗО:235/5/78, p. 31; "An alle D/Räte...." ГАЗО:235/4/73, p. 95; "An die Chortitzer Rayonsinspektor...." ГАЗО:235/2/65, p. 5; "Liste... Schülerbibliothek...." ГАЗО:235/2/65, pp. 6f; "Liste fehlenden... Schulbücher...." ГАЗО:235/2/60.

170. "An alle Schulen...." ГАЗО:235/2/60, p. 76; "Arbeitsplan...." ГАЗО:235/2/54, pp. 4ff; "An die Redaktion...." ГАЗО:235/2/64, pp. 88, 95f; "An das Chortitzer RVK," ГАЗО: 235/2/64, pp. 90, 93.

171. "Lehrerin Dyck Rosenbach," ГАЗО:235/2/65, pp. 15; "Lehrer Unruh Schönhorst!" ГАЗО:235/2/65, p. 25; "Gibt es in Russland eine Christenverfolgung?" DB, 18 June 1930, p. 3; "An die Inspektur für Volksaufklarung...." ГАЗО:235/2/63, p. 87.

172. "Trauriger Brief aus Russland," MR, 8 April 1931, p. 7; "Mehr Aufmerksamkeit der kommunistischen Erziehung!" ST, 18 Januar 1934, p. 2; "Die deutsche Schule in der Sowjet-Ukraine soll zum Bollwerk der Gottlosen werden," DB, 30 April 1930, p. 4.

173. "Выводы...." ГАЗО:235/2/64, p. 71; "An alle Schulen...." ГАЗО:235/2/58, p. 213; "An den Rayoninspektor...." ГАЗО:235/2/64, p. 113; "Enquete über die Arbeitsverhältnisse des Steugers...." ГАЗО:235/2/62, p. 17.

174. "Molotschnaja," MR, 25 February 1931, pp. 6f; "Resolution zum Berichte...." ОЗоКПУ:241/205/11, p. 7; "An den Münsterberger Dorfrat...." ГАЗО:1429/1/36, p. 46.

175. "Aus dem Briefe eines Lehrers," DB, 28 January 1931, p. 3; "Bericht über die Durchführung des Antioster-Kampagne...." ГАЗО:235/2/62a, pp. 4f.

176. "An d. Chortitzer R.V.K...." ГАЗО:235/2/64, p. 93; "Auf der Insel Chortitza," DB, 4 February 1931, p. 3.

177. "До всіх райінспекторів...." ГАЗО:235/2/59, pp. 101ff; "Оголошення," ГАЗО: 235/2/64, p. 52; "Предварительная смета...." ГАЗО:235/1/789, pp. 21-32; "Плян підготовки та підвищення кваліфікації робітників...." ГАЗО:235/2/62, p. 10.

178. "An alle Dorfrat...." ГАЗО:235/3/45, p. 75; "Die anti-religiöse Arbeit in Russland," ZB, 5 July 1933, pp. 14f; "Gottes geheimnisvolles Walten," ZB, 23 April 1930, pp. 11ff.

179. "Hier mit einer Gottlosenzelle!" ST, 24 April 1934, p. 2; "Wir haben mit der ewig verdummenden Kirche gebrochen," ST, 18 April 1934, p. 2; "Friedensruhe, Molotschna," DB, 23 December 1931, p. 3.

180. "Was sagen die Kommunisten über die Religionsverfolgungen in der U.S.S.R.?," ZB, 15 October 1930, pp. 12f; Görz, Memrick, p. 70.

181. "Schönwiese bei Alexandrowsk," DB, 15 November 1933, p. 4; "Adelsheim (Chortitza)," CGWD:146/1/3-42.

182. "Nachrichten aus Chortitza, Südrussland," DB, 25 March 1931, pp. 3f.

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185. "Kollektivisten! Nicht die Feier des sogenannten `Osterfestes' sichert euch eine hohe Ernte sondern die rasche Beendigung der Aussaat und eure ehrliche Arbeit," ST, 5 April 1934, p. 4; "Eine goldene Hochzeit. Chortitza," DB, 8 February 1933, p. 2; "Nowo-Chortitza, Baratow," DB, 11 February 1931, p. 3; "Memrik," DB, 17 February 1932, p. 5.

186. "Teure Geschwister im Herrn!," MR, 23 March 1932, p. 6; "Aus dem Ohrloffer Altenheim," MR, 27 April 1932, p. 6.

187. "Nachrichten aus Chortitza," DB, 9 July 1930, pp. 3f; "Memriker Ansiedlung, Südrussland," DB, 29 July 1931, p. 4; "Aus Osterwick, Chortitzer Wolost wird unter dem 29 Juni geschreiben," DB, 3 August 1932, p. 4; "Rosental bei Chortitza," DB, 12 July 1933, p. 3.

188. "Brecht den Einfluß der Kulaken auf die Frauen!" ГАЗО:235/2/95, p. 27; "Werte Genossen!" ГАЗО:235/2/95, p. 28.

189. Rempel, Liebenau, p. 150; Loewen, Jasykowo, pp. 86ff.

190. Neufeld, Tiefenwege, pp. 25ff, 32.

191. "Wie es aus Sagradowka zugeht," MR, 17 May 1933, p. 6; "Die Kollektivisierung. Aus einem Briefe von Memrik," DB, 12 March 1930, p. 4; "Nachlässigkeit oder Verbrechen?" ST, 27 Januar 1934, p. 2.

192. "Протокол № 96...." ГАЗО: 3482/1/18, p. 233; "Das proletarische Gericht ist unterbittlich," ST, 5 April 1934, p. 2; "Der Pferdeschinder Hübert," ST, 23 Juli 1934, p. 1; "Der Erhaltung des Viehbestandes alle Aufmerksamkeit. Zur strengsten Verantwortung jene, die ähnlichen Kulakentendenzen anheim fallen, wie Abraham Jak. Löwen u. A. Aus dem Kollektiv Dnjeprostroj!" ST, 15 August 1934, p. 2; "Der Kulakenagitator Dyck hetzt weiter," ST, 22 August 1934, p. 2; "Klassen sprengt die Versammlung," ST, 22 August 1934, p. 2; "Thiessen untergräbt das Kollektiv," ST, 6 September 1934, p. 2.

193. "Protokoll № 45...." ГАЗО:2953/1/4, p. 84; "Protokoll...." ГАЗО:3452/1/25, pp. 166, 174; Rempel, Liebenau, p. 159.

194. "Für eine bolschewistische Disziplin!" ST, 5 April 1934, p. 1; "Protokoll №...." ГАЗО:3452/1/9, pp. 7,11; "Protokoll №...." ГАЗО:3452/1/18, pp. 115, 146; "Aus dem Gerichtssaale. Die Gewalttäterin Susanna Dyck vor dem proletarischen Gericht," ST, 24 August 1934, p. 2; "Molotschnaja," MR, 25 February 1931, pp. 6f.

195. "...Орловскому с/совету....." ГАЗО:3452/1/92, p. 8; "An das Halbstädter Volksgericht...." ГАЗО:3452/1/92, p. 13; "Акт 1932...." ГАЗО:3452/1/92, pp. 18, 20; "Протокол...." ГАЗО:3452/1/92, p. 19; "Список...." ГАЗО: 3452/1/92, p. 35; "Auftrag...."

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196. Loewen, Jasykowo, pp. 71f; "Protokoll № 26....." ГАЗО:1429/1/40, p. 9; "Wie es aus Sagradowka zugeht," MR, 17 May 1933, p. 6.

197. "An den Münsterberger Dorfrat," ГАЗО:1429/1/36, p. 20; "Протокол № 96...." ГАЗО:3482/1/18, p. 233.

Chapter IV

Soviet Mennonites in Ukraine and the Crimea during the 1932-1933 Famine

The 1932-1933 famine in Ukraine represents a profound historical event in the history and collective understanding of the Ukrainian people. Often characterized as a man-made catastrophe that resulted in the death of millions of Ukrainians, the 1932-1933 famine is viewed as a deliberate attempt by the Soviet regime to punish Ukrainians for past misdeeds. Some have gone so far as to characterize the famine as nothing less than a deliberate act of genocide by the Stalinist regime against the Ukrainian population -- an act of mass extermination initiated by a government that was threatened by the popularity of Ukrainization, the rise of Ukrainian national consciousness in the Communist party, and the widespread Ukrainian resistance to dekulakization and collectivization. In the collective consciousness of many Ukrainians today, the famine was no less heinous than the Holocaust of World War II -- a planned, deliberate and ruthless attempt by a government to exterminate an ethnic minority.[1]

The question that arises is what impact, if any, did the 1932-1933 famine play in the settlements and regions populated by Soviet Mennonites. Does the famine loom as large in the collective mind set of Soviet Mennonites who were living in Ukraine and the Crimea as it does for Ukrainians? Is it correct to assume that there was a famine in all Mennonite settlements across Ukraine? Does the Mennonite experience in Ukraine during 1932 and 1933 corroborate the Ukrainian experience? Is the term "genocide" applicable in describing and interpreting what occurred in the Mennonite countryside between 1932 and 1933? By addressing these questions we will see not only in what ways the Mennonite experience of the famine was similar and dissimilar to that of Ukrainians, but also whether the interpretative paradigm of the genocide theory is applicable in understanding what happened to a minority group such as the Mennonites in 1932 and 1933.

The Demands of the State

The portents of a famine were already evident in 1930 and 1931 in various regions of the USSR. The Soviet government's exacting grain expropriation campaigns in the early 1930s ensured widespread food shortages in the countryside. Squeezing out of the peasantry any excess grain that had been harvested, the Soviet government systematically confiscated large amounts of grain needed by the peasants for food, livestock fodder, and seed. In 1930, for instance, 22 of the 83.5 million tons of grain that were harvested in the USSR were delivered to government granaries and storage depots. The repercussions of the procurement measures were felt in 1931 when the country's grain harvest dropped to approximately 69 million tons of grain. Dramatic decreases in the country's grain production, however, did not translate into corresponding decreases in the procurement quotas. Instead, the government increased the quota to 22.8 million tons of grain.[2] By the end of 1931, millions of Soviet peasants were experiencing the pangs of hunger.

These unreasonable demands for grain between 1930 and 1932 were felt most severely by the peasantry in Ukraine where grain procurement plans were comparatively higher than in other republics in the USSR.[3] In 1930, for example, the republic of Ukraine was required to supply the government with 7.7 million of the 23 million tons of grain that it produced. The Ukrainian countryside delivered over 35% of all the grain procured in the Soviet Union, even though Ukraine produced only 27% of the country's grain. A similar procurement plan of 7.7 million tons of grain was levied on Ukraine in 1931. Although Soviet authorities knew that the Ukrainian harvest had fallen to approximately 18.3 million tons of grain and that nearly 30% of this amount was lost during the harvest, they still demanded that Ukraine supply the same quota as in the previous year. Meeting this demand was impossible, however, and the republic delivered only 7 million tons.[4]

The government's plan for the country's agricultural production intensified in 1932. Directives from Moscow called for the collectivization of 80% to 90% of all agricultural land by the end of 1932. Extortionist quotas for grain and other agricultural products such as meat and milk also continued in 1932. Despite the likelihood of major crop failures in many regions of the Soviet Union, the Soviet government increased the national grain procurement quota to an unprecedented 29.5 million tons. In Ukraine the poor harvest of 14.6 million tons of wheat as well as protests from Ukrainian authorities succeeded in convincing Soviet officials in Moscow to lower the procurement quota for Ukraine to 6.5 million tons. Despite this reduction, Ukrainian authorities were still able to supply only 4.7 million tons of grain to the Soviet government by the end of 1932.[5]

Much of the grain delivered to the government in 1932 and 1933 was extracted from the peasants by search brigades who terrorized their victims and combed through their huts in search of any grain that could be found. Other draconian measures were also taken to ensure that the peasants complied with all of the government's demands. Those who refused to surrender their hidden caches of grain to the brigades were often accused of stealing from socialist property and subsequently imprisoned or executed. In some cases the search brigades and local authorities accused entire collective farms of hiding grain and sabotaging the government's grain procurement campaigns. As punishment some collectives were blacklisted, which meant that their consumer good stores were closed down, the property of their members was confiscated, members were prohibited from participating in trade with other collective farms, and the collective farms' executive and membership were purged of their unreliable elements, foreigners, and alleged saboteurs.[6] Hunger and starvation usually afflicted members of blacklisted collective farms sooner and more severely than those living on other farms.

What were the consequences of the famine on the Ukrainian and Crimean countryside? In 1932 and during the winter of 1932-1933, half-starved peasants with swollen abdomens and bare-boned limbs were a common sight in a large number of Ukrainian communities. With no food in their pantries, many peasants either begged or foraged the countryside for food in order to survive. The diets of a large number of peasants included everything from vermin to horse manure. Some even resorted to cannibalism, living on the flesh of deceased family members in order to stay alive.

Throughout 1932 and 1933 Soviet government publicly denied accusations from the international community that there was a famine within its borders -- a policy which ensured a sentence of death by disease or starvation for large segments of its population. Although estimates as to the number of people who died as a result of the famine range from fewer than 100,000 to as many as 10 million, the general consensus among a large number of historians is that the famine death toll ranged from between 6 and 7 million Soviet citizens. Between 4 and 5 million of these citizens were inhabitants of Ukraine. Of the millions who died prematurely at this time, the overwhelming majority were not members of the kulak class, but of the poor and middle peasantry.[7]

The Impact of the Famine in the Mennonite Countryside

Of course, the human suffering and death that occurred within Ukraine was not confined to Ukrainians, but affected members of all nationalities and ethnic affiliations, including Mennonites. Within both Ukraine and the Crimea, hunger and privation were commonplace in collective farms inhabited by Mennonites as early as the autumn of 1931 and during the winter of 1931-1932. The less-than-progressive harvesting methods practised on many collectives, the government's outrageous grain quotas and export commitments, and the skimpy wages and food rations paid to collectivized Mennonites insured that their larders were empty by the spring of 1932.[8] The common practice among soviet agencies, such as the local MTS and ECDS, of skimming off large amounts of grain for themselves also meant that many collective farms did not have sufficient seed to sow their fields the following spring. The uncooperative weather conditions in the summer of 1932 and spring of 1933 only exacerbated the desperate conditions, and contributed to the widespread crop failures experienced in many regions of Ukraine and the Crimea in 1932 and 1933. High temperatures and dry winds desiccated crops and caused drought conditions in a number of the collective farms in Mennonite-populated areas, and particularly the Chortitza colony, in 1932. Unexpected frost in 1933 in the Molotschna region resulted in the destruction of much of the winter wheat that had been sown in the fall of 1932. Many of the crops that managed to germinate were eventually infested and destroyed by the Hessan fly, particularly in the Rosenort (Molotschna) area. Much of what was harvested at the end of the summer of 1932 was either confiscated by government officials or left to rot in the fields during the following autumn and winter.[9]

In 1932 it was not unusual for government agencies to require collective farms to deliver more grain and agricultural produce than the collectives were able to produce. Under pressure from Moscow, local officials routinely and arbitrarily raised grain quotas anywhere from 25% to 100% at a moment's notice. To meet government demands, collective farms and village soviets created their own internal grain collection commissions whose mandate was to investigate various methods that could be implemented to locate the additional grain that was required. The protocols of weekly meetings of collective farms, village soviets, and the CVP in Mennonite-populated areas indicate that what usually dominated the meetings' agenda were the repeat failures of local collectives to meet their quotas and the logistics of implementing another recommendation by the grain collection commission, such as rethreshing straw and chaff, to meet the government's increasing demands for grain. For example, when the Blumenstein (Molotschna) collective recognized that it would not be able to meet its grain quota it was agreed, among other things, that there was a lack of work discipline among members, lazy workers should receive corporeal punishment, and a more vigilant attack against the kulak elements in the collective would be necessary.[10] Such measures, however, usually proved unsuccessful in retrieving significant amounts of additional grain, and when grain deficits continued to increase authorities from the village soviet and collective farm executive often lashed out against ordinary rank-and-file members, expelling them from the collective for conspiring with the kulak to sabotage the country's collectivization efforts. This was the experience of some Mennonite members of the Rosenort (Molotschna) collective farm who were accused of sabotaging the collective farm's efforts to meet the grain quotas, and who were subsequently expelled from the collective. Local newspapers and Communist Party officials also approved of such measures, stating that the fight for bread and grain entailed an all-out war against kulaks, speculators, and their agents among the collectivized peasantry who were responsible for the declining performance of Soviet agriculture. In reality, it was a war against ordinary peasants who had to make up for the shortfalls by re-threshing straw and chaff left in the fields, forfeiting their food rations, and surrendering what little grain they might have hidden.[11]

Other factors also contributed to the famine-like conditions that emerged in 1932. The parsimonious wages and skimpy food rations that collective farms intermittently doled out to their workers left many in want. With many members earning less than a kilogram of grain per day and less than 30 rubles per month, few could afford to feed and clothe themselves, let alone their families. Even worse off were widows and single women who were members of the collective farm but who were unable to earn enough work units to receive adequate daily rations; these women routinely petitioned the collective farm executive for rations equal to those that were allocated for other members.[12] Escalating food prices, crippling taxes, obligatory donations to local government-sanctioned agencies (such as village soviets, hospitals, schools), and severe reductions in livestock numbers also reduced many Mennonites to a life of mendicancy and starvation. Since a large portion of an individual's wages were siphoned off through government taxes, the average collective farm member could scarcely afford to buy grain for his or her family when prices ranged between 60 and 200 rubles per pood.[13] In such extraordinary circumstances, only a privileged few -- namely, local officials and members of the Communist Party, village soviets, and collective farm executives -- were able to live without want for food.

The government's implementation of extraordinary measures to retrieve additional grain from the peasantry only aggravated the material plight of collectivized Mennonites. In some regions of Ukraine and the Crimea, local officials made public announcements (especially in the early months of 1933) calling upon the peasants to return all of the grain that they had taken or stolen from the collectives. The announcements initially promised that those surrendering the grain voluntarily to officials would be reimbursed rather than punished. At a collective in the Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka] region, for example, officials promised 2 kilograms of potatoes for each kilogram of grain that was delivered to them.[14] Government pleas such as these usually fell on deaf ears, however, and officials from local branches of the ECDS and the Communist Party soon adopted a more threatening attitude, warning everyone from the chairmen to the lowliest members of the collectives that they would be tried and sentenced in the People's Court if they failed to meet their grain quotas. These threats were also ignored as collective farm members continued to steal and hoard grain despite possible exile and imprisonment. In order to let the peasantry know that the government meant business, special search brigades consisting of soldiers from the Red Army, brigadiers from the collective farms, and members of the local village soviet, the MTS, the Komsomol, and the Communist Party were deployed to ensure that the shortfalls in government grain supplies would be converted into surpluses.[15] Searching cellars, cupboards, attics, and even wells, the brigades seized all of the grain and comestibles that they found. Those Mennonites found in possession of hidden grain supplies were branded as saboteurs and kulaks and immediately arrested. Local courts subsequently meted out swift and severe justice to anyone accused of wrongfully withholding grain. Mennonites accused of stealing were usually fined heavily or evicted from their homes and the collective farms. At some collectives the convicted wrongdoers were exiled. In extreme cases Mennonites were sentenced to death after being accused of hiding grain or corn gleaned from local fields. There were even some cases in which Mennonites were arrested for possessing grain despite the fact that no grain was found on their premises. In the Schlachtin-Baratov [Sofiïvka] region, for example, brigades threatened to arrest and exile all of the members of a Mennonite household unless the male head of the household confessed to stealing grain.[16] With so many search brigades on the loose, it was common for Mennonites to divest themselves of their surplus grain and food to avoid possible arrest and execution.

Local authorities in some regions also enacted laws prohibiting anyone from owning livestock. Although many collectives allowed their members to keep a cow or a pig for their own use in 1930 and 1931, almost all collectives were ordered to abandon this policy by 1932. In Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]) and Orloff (Sagradowka), for example, a large number of animals belonging to collectivized Mennonites were nationalized and moved into collective farm stalls. The collective farm executive in Rosenort (Molotschna), on the other hand, ordered its members to deliver their cows and pigs to local authorities so that the collective could attain its meat quota. While there were Mennonites who resisted these measures by slaughtering their livestock and participating in small revolts, authorities were successful in compelling the majority of Mennonites to surrender their last remaining horse, cow, hog, or chicken to the government.[17]

Rampant livestock theft and shortages in animal fodder made it a constant challenge for Mennonites to raise livestock in those regions where private ownership of farm animals was still allowed. Collectivized Mennonites in the Chortitza region were beset with an unusually high incidence of livestock rustling. One Mennonite complained that his pigs and chickens were pilfered by sticky-fingered neighbours. A woman decided to keep her pig in the kitchen and her chickens in the cellar for night after her barn was broken into twice. Even food supplies, clothes, firewood, and animal dung (used for heating) were routinely purloined from unsuspecting Mennonites. Thefts of food supplies in Mennonite homes and collective farm stores were also common occurrences. In some villages, thievish individuals resorted to graverobbing in order to purchase food. In May of 1933, for example, a Mennonite from Schönwiese (Chortitza) reported that someone looted a Mennonite grave, presumably looking for jewelry or gold.[18] Imminent starvation compelled the hungry to steal from the living as well as the dead in order to survive.

Very desperate conditions prevailed in Mennonite-populated collective farms in 1932 and 1933. Drought, extraordinary taxes and grain procurement campaigns, inadequate wages and food rations, widespread theft and rampant lawlessness in various regions made life impossible for some collectivized Mennonites. What also aggravated the situation were government laws and restrictions which prevented Soviet Mennonites from taking any collective action to alleviate their suffering and hunger. Prohibited from working together in non-Soviet associations and congregations, collectivized Mennonites could not organize relief campaigns or publicly solicit aid from Mennonite organizations in the West. The real threat of exile and imprisonment made this impossible. As a result, there was no collective Soviet Mennonite response to address and alleviate the severe food crises in the Mennonite countryside; each Mennonite household was left to its own devices to find enough food to survive.

Avoiding Starvation

Government efforts to alleviate the hunger and suffering in the countryside were few and far between. While the Red Cross did establish some relief centres in a number of Mennonite-populated areas, the officials overseeing these centres were usually at the beck and call of local government officials and were often hamstrung by government red tape in their attempts to provide succour to those in need. Even petitions for food and relief from collective farm executives and their members were routinely ignored by government officials.[19]

There were Mennonites who migrated to other regions in the USSR to avoid starvation. The pervasive rumour that food was more readily available in other cities and regions convinced Mennonites to leave their homes in search of sustenance. Officials tried to discourage such migratory treks for food by enforcing a strictly controlled internal passport system which required anyone travelling in Ukraine and the Crimea to carry proper travel and employment papers. Nevertheless, some Mennonites still managed to move to other regions despite not having the proper documentation, while others caught trying to obtain work without the proper papers were arrested and incarcerated, and their families were left to beg on city streets for food.[20] Mennonites also migrated legally to nearby villages or cities where more food and better jobs could be found; in other cases, they moved to distant regions, such as Siberia, where grain and other food commodities were reportedly more readily accessible. Although such reports were often exaggerated and unreliable, Mennonites who migrated out of the Ukrainian and Crimean countryside were generally able to improve their material condition and minimize their suffering during the famine years.[21]

What reduced the incidence of hunger among those Mennonites who remained in Ukraine and the Crimea were the visits by foreign delegations, the receipt of foreign aid from the West, and the establishment of Torgsin stores across Ukraine. As was noted in Chapter III, the arrival of a foreign delegation to a particular district resulted in significant depreciations in food prices, drastic increases in food rations and wages, and a temporary improvement in living conditions. Packages containing food and money from friends and relatives in Western Europe and North America also substantially improved the plight of Mennonites in Ukraine and the Crimea. Long-awaited parcels containing flour, rice, sugar, pork, pasta, and powdered milk helped to stave off the pangs of hunger for many. The foreign currency that was occasionally found in the parcels and letters also allowed Mennonite households to purchase additional food commodities at reasonable prices in the Torgsin stores.[22]

The relief efforts of B. H. Unruh (Karlsruhe, Germany), the law firm of Fast and

Brilliant (Berlin), and various agencies such as the Mennonite Central Committee (North America) and *Brüder in Not* (Germany) also improved the plight of thousands of Mennonites in famine-affected regions across Ukraine and the Crimea. It was B. H. Unruh who played the most important role in drawing international attention to the desperate plight of Soviet Mennonites and coordinating the relief efforts of Mennonite and non-Mennonite relief agencies in 1932 and 1933. Working in Germany as the spokesman for Soviet Mennonites, Unruh was the best informed person on Soviet Mennonites and took it upon himself to prepare monthly and sometimes weekly reports for Mennonite leaders and relief agencies in Germany and North America concerning the condition of Soviet Mennonite families in the early 1930s. From Unruh's reports, Mennonite churches in North America, the Mennonite Central Committee, and the German Red Cross organized relief campaigns on behalf of Mennonites in the USSR. With the assistance of the Berlin law firm of Fast and Brilliant, Unruh prepared the necessary paper work to have food parcels from these various groups forwarded to Soviet Mennonites.[23]

Much of the information that Unruh provided in his reports came from the hundreds of letters that he had received from Soviet Mennonites in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Information also came from his contacts in the German government, as well as non-Mennonite relief agencies. Having worked closely with the German government in negotiating the emigration of thousands of Soviet Mennonites to Germany in the fall of 1929, Unruh had the ear of a surprising number of officials in the German government and they routinely exchanged information on the plight of *Sowjetdeutsche* (ethnic Germans who were Soviet citizens) in the USSR. Perhaps Unruh's most important German goverment source of information on the famine in Ukraine was Dr. Ewald Ammende, a Nazi sympathizer who assumed the directorship of the international relief organization *Brüder in Not*. Although the stated aims of *Brüder in Not* was to provide non-political, humanitarian aid to the *Sowjetdeutsche*, Ammende and the Nazis used the organization to establish illegal contacts with *Sowjetdeutsche*, ascertain the degree of loyalty of *Sowjetdeutsche* to Germany, impress upon *Sowjetdeutsche* the racial superiority of the German people, and launch propaganda attacks against the Soviet Union by exaggerating the severity of the famine.[24] Unruh relied on Ammende and *Brüder in Not* to provide information on the current conditions in the USSR, assistance in shipping the food parcels to Soviet Mennonites, and help in ensuring that the food parcels were delivered to their intended recipients.[25] Although these relief efforts were sometimes governed by ulterior political motives, they nonetheless alleviated the suffering experienced by starving Mennonites in 1932 and 1933. It is even fair to say that these relief efforts helped to lower the percentage of Mennonites reduced to beggary and starvation when compared to non-Mennonites in the same region.[26]

That the Nazis intended to use non-governmental relief agencies for their own political purposes was evident before Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933. Enraged over the post-World War settlement concerning the borders of Germany wherein large German minorities were ceded to surrounding countries, Hitler viewed these private relief agencies -- which had already begun monitoring the plight of *Sowjetdeutsche* since the late 1920s -- as a way of uniting German people and working toward one common political purpose: to expand the borders of Germany and provide *Lebensraum* for the Aryan nation. By the spring of 1933, many of these private agencies -- including the *Deutsches Ausland-Institut*and the *Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland* -- were Nazified, and their ostensible purpose of providing famine relief to *Sowjetdeutsche* became the facade behind which the Nazi government spread its fascist ideas among the *Sowjetdeutsche*. The Nazis also established government agencies, such as the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* and the *Forschungsstelle des Russlanddeutschtums*, to keep alight the flame of Germanism among *Sowjetdeutsche* and to mobilize them into German fifth columns.[27]

To monitor the success of their objectives, the Nazis relied on secret reports provided by diplomats at the German embassy in Moscow and the German consulates in Kharkiv, Kiev, and Odessa. Established in Ukraine after World War I, the German consulates sent detailed reports to both the Weimar and Nazi governments. In the early 1930s, these consular reports -- which included detailed information on everything from Ukrainian grain production statistics to the incidence of cannibalism in German-populated regions of Ukraine in 1933 -- assisted the Weimar and Nazi governments in assessing the severity of the famine in various regions of the USSR as a whole and more particularly in those areas populated by *Sowjetdeutsche*. The consulates also forwarded information on the success of relief efforts of various groups, such as *Brüder in Not*, and the growing Soviet antagonism toward such relief efforts which were often castigated in Soviet newspapers as nothing other than a pretext for spreading Nazi propaganda.[28]

Notwithstanding its characterization of these relief efforts as a front for Nazi propaganda and its public denial that there was a famine in Ukraine in 1932 and 1933, the Soviet government allowed food parcels from Germany to cross the borders of the USSR. Why did the Soviet regime allow this aid to get through when it repeatedly denied that there was a famine and brought in teams of foreign delegates and correspondents to substantiate their claims? One reason why the Soviet government permitted foreign relief to cross its borders was because of precedence. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Soviet government consented to food parcels and letters with monetary relief to be delivered to Soviet citizens, including Mennonites, in collective farms and exile camps. Although these relief packages were regularly pilfered by local officials and guards, they provided an important source of additional food to the countryside which often significantly improved the health of their recipients. Accepting relief packages during 1932-1933 was simply an extension of a policy that already existed

The Soviet government's desire for foreign currency was another motivating factor to allow packages and letters from Germany and the West to come into the country. In many respects, the Soviet government actually appears to have encouraged the delivery of foreign parcels and letters to its citizens until 1933, as is evidenced by the fact that the Soviet government did not routinely censor or destroy all foreign letters and packages, even though it often censored and destroyed letters written by Soviet Mennonites to their relatives or friends living in other regions of the USSR. In 1932, the Soviet government established Torgsin stores across the USSR which only catered to customers with foreign currency. In this mutually beneficial arrangement, citizens who received foreign currency in relief packages or letters could purchase much needed food staples, while the government acquired the foreign currency to purchase goods and military hardware that were only available in the West.

Facilitating better relations between the Soviet Union and Germany was another reason why the Soviet government permitted foreign humanitarian aid, and particularly relief from Germany, to enter the country. The results of World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution had branded both Germany and the Soviet Union as pariahs in the international community, and the Soviet Union was now keenly interested in improving its economic and political relationship with other countries -- including Germany, which continued to receive a cold shoulder from many western nations. Accepting food parcels and relief from Germany demonstrated a willingness on the part of the USSR to strengthen its fragile relationship with Germany; allowing humanitarian aid from Germany was part and parcel of the Soviet Union's negotiating strategy to foster stronger economic and diplomatic ties with the West. What temporarily cooled German-Soviet relations was the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor of Germany in January of 1933. Not long after the Nazis came to power, the

Soviet Union punished Germany and *Sowjetdeutsche* for this new political state of affairs in Germany by imposing restrictions; for example, the government dramatically curbed the amount of food parcels and aid transported into the USSR in the early months of 1933, and restricted the number of letters that its citizens could send to the West. Some of these restrictions were only temporary, however, as the Soviet government did not want to jeopardize the progress it had made with Germany. As a result, the Soviet government permitted some organizations, such as *Brüder in Not*, to resume their relief efforts in the USSR in mid-1933, notwithstanding their strong ties with the Nazi government. Other restrictions, such as limitations on the amount of correspondence leaving the USSR, became permanent, thus severely hampering the flow of information that western aid agencies required to coordinate their relief efforts.[29]

International relations, political ideology, economic considerations, humanitarian concerns, and Christian charity were some of the reasons why Soviet Mennonites received food parcels and monetary aid from the West. Those relief efforts undertaken by Unruh, Mennonite churches, and Mennonite relief agencies were for the most part motivated by Christian charity and humanitarian concern. Although Unruh made use of various German and later Nazi agencies such as *Brüder in Not* in coordinating his relief campaigns, political motivations did not play a large role in his relief work; his only concern was to provide food and money to his co-religionists in the USSR, an activity that he and other Mennonite relief agencies, had been involved with since the late 1920s. For some non-Mennonites agencies as well as for the German and Soviet governments, however, their relief efforts had more to do with developing stronger international ties and promoting their politics than humanitarian considerations. In many respects, it was the political and economic motivations of the German and Soviet governments that determined the success and longevity of Mennonite relief efforts.

Life on the Collectives in 1932 and 1933

The persistent shortage of food and money forced many Mennonites who remained in the Ukrainian and Crimean countryside to lead a hand-to-mouth existence. Collective farm officials, such as those in charge of the Tiege (Molotschna) and Rosenort (Molotschna) collectives, imposed strict rationing requirements for all food commodities, including milk for children, which was often limited to a 1/4 litre per day. Officials at other collectives found it impossible to provide enough food for all of their members, even after the harvest of 1932.

Widespread shortages of essential foodstuffs in 1932 and 1933 saw some collectivized Mennonites go without basic food staples for weeks and months at a time. A large number of collectivized Mennonites in the Molotschna colony went without bread for months at a time, while many in the Chortitza region did not have any bread during the autumn and early winter of 1932.[30] The result was that thousands of Mennonites were forced to look for other sources of nourishment. This was the experience of some collectivized Mennonites in Schöneberg (Chortitza) who lived almost entirely on a vegetable diet. Other Mennonites subsisted on a borscht-style soup prepared from potatoes, cabbage, vegetables, and other plants grown in their gardens or found in the fields. Beans, turnips, pumpkins, and rice added a slight variation to the daily fare of soup. At a collective farm near Halbstadt (Molotschna), Mennonites were so desperate for food that they resorted to eating rotting beets and ears of corn usually set aside as livestock fodder. In Wernersdorf (Molotschna) Mennonites often ate roots of various plants as part of their daily diet, while those in Liebenau (Molotschna) used turnips, cornstalks, pumpkins, bonemeal, thistles, tree bark, and sawdust to thicken their bread dough.[31] Mice, crows, cats, dogs, and diseased livestock were also eaten by penurious Mennonites. In the Molotschna colony, for example, it was reported that 755 families ate horse meat, 469 families ate crows, 344 families ate cats, and 184 families ate dogs from the spring of 1932 to the summer of 1933. The inhabitants of Wernersdorf (Molotschna) were so desperate for food that they fought among themselves to determine who had the privilege of catching and eating some of the remaining cats in the area. Other Mennonites were so hungry that they ate the carrion of rotting animals. This was the experience of some Mennonites from Halbstadt (Molotschna), Wernersdorf (Molotschna), and the Sagradowka region who lived on fetid animal carcasses to stave off starvation.[32]

Desperate conditions also forced a number of Mennonites into a life of mendicancy during the famine years. In villages such as Wernersdorf (Molotschna), Pragenau (Molotschna), Priegorie, Alexanderkrone (Sagradowka), Franzfeld (Yazykovo [Lukashivka]), and Rosental (Chortitza), Mennonites begged for food from local inhabitants who were rarely better off than the beggars themselves. Some of these beggars were disenfranchised Mennonites who had returned from exile or prison and were prohibited from obtaining employment or joining a collective farm.[33] Homeless children whose parents were exiled, imprisoned, or dead also made up a significant portion of the mendicant population. The most that children in such circumstances could hope for was to be adopted by their collectivized Mennonite relatives. Although government officials took steps to put many of these waifs in orphanages and children's labour camps, a significant number of homeless children continued to live on their own or in small gangs surviving almost entirely on whatever they acquired by begging and petty thievery.[34]

Starvation, suicide, and disease cut short the lives of Mennonites who were not successful at acquiring food on a regular basis. With no nourishment for weeks at a time, mendicant Mennonites soon developed the symptoms of severe malnutrition -- gaunt faces, distended stomachs, and painful headaches. The physical pain and emotional distress associated with severe malnutrition was too much for some Mennonites to endure, and suicide was the only way to escape their torment. Other Mennonites succumbed to fatal illnesses. Malnutrition, improper clothing, and overexposure to cold temperatures during the winter of 1932-1933 made many Mennonites prime candidates for typhus, smallpox, pneumonia, diphtheria, and malaria.[35] At a number of collective farms in the Chortitza, Yazykovo [Lukashivka], and Molotschna regions, typhus afflicted a large segment of the Mennonite population and sent some to an early grave. A Mennonite from Blumenort (Molotschna), for example, reported that typhus took the lives of a number of Mennonites and left 25 others seriously ill by the early spring of 1932. In Münsterberg (Molotschna), the local collective was ordered to build a bathhouse not later than December 20, 1933 to help combat a typhus epidemic that broke out in the local collective earlier that year. Molotschna officials were also threatened with fines and imprisonment if they failed to properly contain the disease.[36] Other maladies, such as pneumonia and malaria, also affected Chortitza colony Mennonites in epidemic proportions. In the autumn of 1933, for instance, a Mennonite from Schönwiese (Chortitza) wrote that approximately 300 people in the Chortitza region were sick with malaria. While limited medical intervention and hospitalization helped to control the plague-like conditions in some areas, the absence of medical facilities in other areas led to the rampant transmission of these illnesses.[37]

The Death Toll in Mennonite-Populated Regions

Premature Mennonite deaths were the natural consequence of widespread hunger and disease in Mennonite communities. In some areas of the Chortitza region, for instance, Mennonites reported that the burial of those who had starved to death was a daily event. In other villages, the bodies of hunger victims were not even buried, but left to rot on the roadsides or in the fields. In Tiege (Molotschna) and Ohrloff (Molotschna), for instance, some Mennonites reported that putrefied corpses, parts of which had been eaten by birds and other scavengers, could often be found on the streets and ditches.[38] Few of the survivors had the energy or will to bury those who had died.

Although famine conditions prevailed in many regions of Ukraine and the Crimea, the incidence of premature death varied significantly from village to village. It was not uncommon for one village to witness a large number of hunger-related deaths while a neighbouring village witnessed no such deaths or only very few. What makes it difficult in ascertaining the number of deaths in Mennonite-populated regions is that there are very few reliable sources that provide details on hunger-related deaths in Mennonite-populated regions. While there are many letters from Soviet Mennonites which detail their suffering and tribulation, there are only a few references to the actual number of hunger-related deaths from particular villages; moreover, because the Soviet government severely curtailed Mennonite correspondence leaving the Soviet Union after Hitler's rise to power in January 1933, there are very few letters which discuss what happened during 1933 or for the number of hunger-related deaths in various Mennonite-populated areas.

The available documentation in former Soviet government archives is largely silent on the number of hunger-related deaths in Mennonite-populated regions; there are also very few sources in North American archives that provide any indication of Mennonite hunger-related deaths. One source that provides some data on the number of hunger-related deaths in a various Mennonite villages in Ukraine is the CGWD. Although the CGWD provides some of the most comprehensive statistical information on Soviet Mennonite life in the early 1930s, there are shortcomings with this material. First, as was already noted in Chapter II, the accuracy of the data in the CGWD is sometimes in question -- it was collected a decade after the 1932-1933 famine by the German Wehrmacht and it is sometimes contradicted by the information found in other sources, such as letters and memoirs. Second, the information in the CGWD is limited in scope -- it only deals with some of the villages in specific Mennonite colonies (for example, Chortitza, Yazykovo, Sagradowka, Borozenko, Schlactin-Baratov) and does not include any information on villages in other colonies (such as Molotschna, the Crimea, and Ignatievo). As a result, the conclusions derived from the data cannot be said to be representative of the Soviet Mennonite experience across Ukraine and the Crimea. Third, the data in the CGWD is often incomplete -- the individuals who prepared the village reports (many of whom were Soviet Mennonite school teachers) on Mennonite settlements in the CGWD did not always provide complete reports. This frequently occurred when the individual preparing a report did not have information on the number of hunger-related deaths in his village and thus did not provide any data on the topic. Despite these shortcomings, the CGWD do provide some general indicia of how particular regions and villages were affected during the 1932-1933 famine, as well as the perceptions of those who collected the data (many of whom were Mennonite teachers) on how the famine affected their region more than a decade earlier. The table below provides a summary of data from the CGWD concerning the hunger-related death tolls in various Mennonite settlements in 1932 and 1933.[39]

Name of Village (Note: hunger death data for villages in italics are from sources other than the CGWD)	**Population of Ethnic Germans (including Mennonites) in Various Years**	**Number of Hunger-Related Deaths**	**Approximate Percentage of Hunger-Related Deaths**
Adelsheim (Yazykovo)	372 in 1929; 393 in 1933	--	0%?
Alexanderfeld (Sagradowka)	368 in 1926; 509 before 1941	15	2.9-4.1%
Alexanderkrone (Sagradowka)	164 in 1926; 187 before 1941	8	4.3-4.9%
Altonau (Sagradowka)	388 in 1926; 602 before 1941	12	2.0- 3.1%
Blumenfeld (Borozenko)	225 in 1930; 245 in 1933	--	0%?
Blumengart (Chortitza)	260 in 1930; 273 before 1941	--	0%?
Blumenort (Sagradowka)	266 in 1926; 308 before 1941	10	3.2-3.8%
Burwalde (Chortitza)	412 in 1928; 320 before 1941	4	1-1.3%
Chortitza (Chortitza)	2600 in 1930; 2100 in 1933	22	1%
Einlage (Chortitza)	1445 in 1926; 1180 in 1930	--	0%?
Felsenbach (Borozenko)	340 before 1941	6	1.8%
Franzfeld (Yazykovo)	426 in 1929; 411 in 1933	--	0%?
Friedensfeld (Borozenko)	140 in 1926; 150 in 1930	--	0%?
Friedensfeld (Sagradowka)	417 in 1926; 633 before 1941	9	1.4-2.2%
Gnadenfeld (Sagradowka)	171 in 1926; 163 before 1941	--	0%?
Gnadental (Schlachtin-Baratov)	559 before 1941	--	0%?
Grünfeld (Borozenko)	395 before 1941	5	1.3%
Hochfeld (Yazykovo)	409 in 1926; 451 in 1933	--	0%?
Kronstal (Chortitza)	581 in 1930	2	0.3%

Kronsweide (Chortitza)	356 in 1930	2	0.6%
Neu-Chortitza (Schlachtin-Baratov)	355 in 1931	13	3.7%
Neuenberg (Chortitza)	312 in 1926; 381 before 1941	1	0.3%
Neuendorf (Chortitza)	1500 in 1930	--	0%?
Neu-Halbstadt (Sagradowka)	198 in 1926; 456 before 1941	41	9-20.7%
Neuhorst (Chortitza)	130 in 1930	--	0%?
Neu-Schönsee (Sagradowka)	321 in 1926; 534 before 1941	13	2.4-4%
Nieder-Chortitza (Chortitza)	835 in 1918; 888 before 1941	11	1.2-1.3%
Nikolaifeld (Sagradowka)	366 in 1926; 359 before 1941	31	8.5-8.6%
Nikolaifeld (Yazykovo)	221 in 1918; 610 before 1941	3	0.5-1.4%
Nikolaital (Borozenko)	226 before 1941	--	0%?
Orloff (Sagradowka)	504 in 1926; 713 before 1941	19	2.7-3.8%
Osterwick (Chortitza)	1310 in 1930	--	0%?
Reinfeld (Sagradowka)	170 in 1919; 111 before 1941	2	1.2-1.8%
Rosenbach (Chortitza)	282 before 1941	1	3.5%
Rosengart (Chortitza)	370 in 1930	--	0%?
Rosenort (Sagradowka)	216 in 1926; 57 before 1941	1	0.5-1.8%
Schönau (Sagradowka)	364 in 1926; 407 before 1941	34	8.4-9.3%
Schöneberg (Chortitza)	350 in 1930	--	0%?
Schöndorf (Borozenko)	132 before 1941	--	0%?
Schönhorst (Chortitza)	850 in 1930; 900 in 1936	--	0%?
Steinau (Borozenko)	220 in 1930; 240 in 1933	--	0%?
Steinfeld (Schlachtin-Baratov)	329 before 1941	5	1.5%
Steinfeld (Sagradowka)	144 in 1926; 82 before 1941	7	4.9-8.5%
Tiege (Sagradowka)	435 in 1926; 526 before 1941	17	3.2-3.9%

Of the 44 villages listed above, there were either no hunger-related deaths or none reported in 17 of the villages. Of those villages which reported famine deaths, 23 had hunger-related death rates of less than 5 percent for their respective populations. There were 3 villages that saw between 5 and 10 percent of their inhabitants die as a result of starvation, and 1 village lost between 10 and 20 percent of its population due to starvation.

The question that inevitably arises from this data is whether there was a famine in all of the Mennonite villages listed above? The short answer to this question is "no." While it is true that a minority of Mennonite villages saw more than 5 percent of their population die from hunger-related deaths, the majority of Mennonite villages did not. These villages experienced drought conditions, inordinate taxes and grain quotas, inadequate wages, disease and suffering, but they did not experience a high incidence of premature death as a result of famine conditions. Not surprisingly, this conclusion flies in the face of, and is difficult to reconcile with the disturbing accounts of suffering and significant loss of life found in the letters and memoirs from Soviet Mennonites who lived in these villages in 1932-1933.

Just as the incidence of famine deaths could vary significantly from village to village, so too there were marked differences between the incidence of hunger-related deaths between various regions. For example, the CGWD indicate that in the Dnipropetrovs'ke region (which had a population of between 15,000 and 17,500 ethnic Germans living in 33 villages, and which included the Chortitza colony) there were at least 76 ethnic Germans who suffered hunger-related deaths in 1932-1933. In other words, between 0.4 percent and 0.5 percent of the entire ethnic German population in the Dnipropetrovs'ke region died because of starvation or related diseases. During the same period in the Sagradowka area (with a population of 4,500 to 6,500 ethnic Germans in 16 villages) there were at least 214 ethnic Germans who died hunger-related deaths; that is, between 3.3 percent and 4.8 percent of the ethnic German population in the Sagradowka area died from starvation or related illnesses.[40] A higher death toll was reported in the Molotschna colony. Letters from Soviet Mennonites and reports from B. H. Unruh indicate that among the 58 villages in the Molotschna colony (with approximately 18,000 people in 1922), there were at least 326 Mennonites who died of starvation in 1932 and 1933. Although centres such as Halbstadt (Molotschna) saw as many as 32 hunger-related deaths at this time, overall the colony saw between 1.5 percent and 4 percent of its population die as a result of starvation.[41] Once again, the data from the CGWD and other sources leave one with the impression that some Mennonite-populated regions (such as Chortitza) did not suffer -- at least a high incidence of hunger-related deaths -- to the same extent in 1932 and 1933 as Ukrainian-populated areas. This is not to say that Mennonite inhabitants of these regions did not suffer terribly during this period -- accounts, letters, and memoirs from these regions confirm that hundreds, if not thousands of Mennonites experienced terrible tribulations at this time. Only a very small minority, however, died as a result of their suffering.

Difficulties also arise in attempting to determine the total number of Mennonites in

Ukraine and the Crimea who died as a result of the 1932-1933 famine. The paucity of Soviet records which detail death rates in Mennonite villages during this period makes it impossible to ascertain the exact number of Mennonite deaths. It is possible, however, to estimate the percentage of the Soviet Mennonite population that died as a result of starvation after taking into account the available data in letters, memoirs, reports, and the CGWD. In this respect it seems likely that no more than 3% to 8% of the Mennonite population in Ukraine and the Crimea lost their lives during the 1932-1933 famine. This estimate is in keeping with the observations of some Mennonites who noted that the percentage of deaths in a number of Mennonite villages was generally lower than the percentage of deaths in neighbouring non-Mennonite communities, and particularly Ukrainian villages, which often saw between 6% and 18.8% of their inhabitants die in 1932 and 1933.[42]

Conclusion

The Soviet government's policy decisions that led to the famine of 1932-1933 constituted nothing less than a preplanned act of terror by a government against its own citizens. In an effort to meet the unreasonable objectives of a 5-Year Plan ahead of schedule and boast about it to the rest of the world, the government in Moscow ignored the advice provided by senior Ukrainian bureaucrats and Communist Party officials and demanded that Ukraine provide the required grain quotas at whatever the cost. The relatively good harvests of previous years could not keep up with the government's excessive expropriation and mismanagement of peasant grain. Such administrative decisions ensured that large numbers of inhabitants in Ukraine would not have enough food for the winter of 1932-1933.

For some Mennonites in Ukraine and the Crimea, the famine of 1932-1933 marked the end of a 5-year period of suffering. Repeated visits from internal grain commissions and search brigades who scoured every cupboard, mattress, attic, and root cellar for grain meant that collectivized Mennonites had to beg from their neighbours, scavenge the countryside, or live on weeds, sawdust, and the carcasses of vermin and diseased animals in an effort to survive. Those who were caught with grain were immediately treated like kulaks and imprisoned, exiled, or executed. As a result of such policies, many Mennonite households in Ukraine and the Crimea lost at least one member of their extended family to starvation or disease, or as a result of punishment meted out for grain theft or wrongful withholding of grain from the state.

Notwithstanding the widespread suffering in Mennonite settlements, the 1932 -1933 famine in Ukraine did not have the same ramifications for collectivized Mennonites as it had for collectivized Ukrainians. From available accounts it appears that the percentage of Mennonites who died as a result of starvation and related diseases in both Ukraine and the Crimea (no more than 3 to 8%) was lower than the mortality rate often cited for the Ukrainian peasantry (ranging from 6% to 18.8%).[43] Why the discrepancy? In part it may have been the significant number of food parcels which Soviet Mennonites received from relief agencies in Germany and North America that enabled many Mennonite families to carry on through the winter of 1932-1933 when so many Ukrainian families were unable to do so. Had Soviet officials not confiscated, destroyed, or returned so many of the parcels to the West -- particularly after Hitler came to power in January 1933 -- the Mennonite mortality rate during the famine might have been even lower.

Another factor which may account for the lower Mennonite mortality rate was the steady flow of foreign currency from the West. Soviet Mennonites were the beneficiaries of thousands of dollars and Deutschmarks from North America and Germany. That the Soviet government found it necessary to open a retail chain of Torgsin stores throughout Ukraine and the USSR indicates that not only Mennonites, but also ordinary Ukrainian and Russian peasants, had foreign currency to spend. For a variety of reasons discussed above, however, it appears that the average Mennonite received more money from the West than the average Ukrainian. This may have enabled Mennonites to purchase more food commodities from the Torgsin stores and the black market than their Ukrainian neighbours.

The extent of dekulakization in some Mennonite-populated regions is another factor that accounts for lower rates of famine-related deaths among Mennonites as compared with the Ukrainian population in general. As was discussed in Chapter II, the high incidence of resettlement, exile and imprisonment of Mennonites in some settlements had so drastically reduced their respective populations that there were very few, if any, Mennonites still living in the communities by 1932 and 1933. In such settlements the number of Mennonite famine-related deaths would correspondingly be significantly lower.

A fourth explanation for the lower rate of premature death among Mennonites is that famine conditions did not exist in a number of Mennonite-populated regions in Ukraine and the Crimea. The available documentation indicates that some Mennonite settlements in Ukraine did not suffer any, or at the most only a few deaths as a result of starvation and related disease. Such a conclusion does not mitigate or deny the untold suffering experienced by thousands of Mennonites during this period; it is simply an acknowledgment that famine conditions did not prevail in every region populated by Mennonites.

Furthermore, whatever has been said about whether the 1932-1933 famine was an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people, it is certain that the 1932-1933 famine did not constitute an act of genocide against the Mennonite population in Ukraine and the Crimea. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the vast majority of Mennonites in Ukraine were not liquidated during the 1932-1933 famine; in fact, the mortality rate of the Mennonite population in both Ukraine and the Crimea during the famine is significantly lower than that of the Ukrainian population. The Stalinist regime certainly had the capability to exterminate the relatively small population of Mennonites in the USSR, but never endeavoured to do so.

Second, there was not a concerted policy on the part of the Soviet regime to exterminate all Soviet Mennonites. Although the Stalinist policies implemented in Ukraine in 1932 and 1933 had far reaching consequences, many of these policies were not implemented in other regions of the USSR that were also populated by Mennonites. If there was a policy to exterminate all Soviet Mennonites, then one might suspect that the government would have taken steps to impose similarly harsh measures to exterminate Mennonite populations outside Ukraine.

Third, the famine was a tragic, painful experience for many Mennonites in Ukraine and the Crimea, but it was not as tragic or painful as the dekulakization of Mennonite settlements between 1929 and 1932. What happened to Mennonites during dekulakization constituted a heinous, barbaric crime of the state against this ethnic religious minority, but it was not an act of genocide. For dekulakization to constitute an act of genocide, the state would have had to have intended to exterminate the entire Soviet Mennonite population; that the regime encouraged less prosperous Mennonites to establish collective farms is evidence that the state did not intend to exterminate all Mennonites during dekulakization. If the dekulakization of Soviet Mennonite settlements does not qualify as an act of genocide, then the famine in Ukraine qualifies even less so.

Finally, it is clear from Soviet Mennonite history that the Soviet Union had the capability of perpetrating genocide against the Soviet Mennonite population if it wanted to. The Soviet government demonstrated this after World War II when it succeeded in eliminating the Mennonite presence in Ukraine and the Crimea by relocating almost every Mennonite to the central republics of the Soviet Union. If the Soviet Union was capable of doing this then, it was certainly capable of doing this less than two decades earlier.

These conclusions certainly call into question the applicability of the genocide theory to all regions of Ukraine, and particularly to the Mennonite-populated areas in Ukraine and the Crimea. While the genocide theory may be relevant in discussing Ukrainian nationalism, politics, and culture in 1932 and 1933, it is not relevant in discussing what happened to Soviet Mennonites during this period.

It is for these reasons that an examination of what happened to Mennonites and other minority groups during Soviet collectivization and the 1932-1933 famine is so important. Interpretative paradigms (such as the genocide theory) that have been previously utilized to understand what happened to Ukrainians during this period are inappropriate for coming to terms with and understanding the Soviet Mennonite experience. The story of what happened to Soviet Mennonites at this time, while sharing many similarities with the Ukrainian experience, is not a carbon copy of the Ukrainian story; the Mennonite story has its own unique features and qualities that distinguishes it significantly from that of other groups. Recognizing this fact demonstrates that the history of the famine in Ukraine in 1932 and 1933 is more complex and nuanced than many Soviet experts previously believed.

Endnotes for Chapter IV

1. James E. Mace, "The Man-Made Famine of 1933 in Soviet Ukraine," in Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933, eds. Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko (Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986), pp. 11; Conquest, The Harvest of Sorrow, p. 306.

2. Ulam, "Introduction" to Dolot's Execution by Hunger, p. x.

3. Mace, "The Man-Made Famine of 1933 in Soviet Ukraine," p. 7.

4. "Письмо ЦК КП/б/У в ЦК ВКП/б/ на имя И. В. Сталина... 1.01.1933-23.12. 1933," ЦДАГОУ:1/20/III/6265, pp. 1ff; Bohdan Krawchenko, "The Man-Made Famine of 1932-1933 and Collectivization in Soviet Ukraine," in Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933, eds. Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko (Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986), p. 19.

5. "О мероприятиях по повышению урожайности... Москва 1932," ГАЗО:2953/1/ 10, p. 41; "Ueber den Plan...." ГАЗО:3952/1/20, pp. 264f; Zlepko, Der ukrainische Hunger-Holocaust, pp. 102ff, 123f;.

6. "Письма за подписью И. В. Сталина, В. М. Молотова, Л. М. Кагановича... Апрель 1933-10.11.1933," ЦДАГОУ:1/20/III/6330, pp. 1ff; "Телеграмма за подписью Л. М. Кагановича...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/III/6305, pp. 1ff; "Постановления ЦК ВКП/б/...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/III/6349, pp. 1ff.

7. Conquest, The Harvest of Sorrow, pp. 230ff, 244, 257f; R. W. Davies, R.W., M.B. Tauger, and S. G. Wheatcroft, "Stalin, Grain Stocks and the Famine of 1932-1933," Slavic Review, 54 (1995), 655ff; M. Maksudov, "Ukraine's Demographic Losses 1927-1938," in Famine in Ukraine, 1932-1933, eds. Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko (Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986), pp. 27ff.

8. "Ohrloff, den 6. Januar 1932. Liebe Freunde!," MR, 2 March 1932, p. 7; "Всем Нешым...." ГАЗО:3952/1/20, p. 86; "Акт...." ГАЗО:3952/1/20, pp. 28f, 67ff.

9. "Beschluß des 4. Außerorderduetlichen Plenum...." ГАЗО:3952/1/20, pp. 260f; "Aus Halbstadt schreibt man Ende März," DB, 4 May 1932, p. 6.

10. "О ходе хлебозаготовок...." ЦДАГОУ:1/20/III/5843, pp. 7ff; "Protokoll № 46...." ГАЗО:1429/1/27, pp. 1ff; "Protokoll № ...." ГАЗО:3452/1/24.

11. "Protokoll №...." ГАЗО:3452/1/24, pp. 79ff; "Brecht den Widerstand des Kulaken und seiner Agenten, erfüllt den Plan der Getreidebeschaffung," Deutscher Kollektivist, Halbstadt (23 Nov. 1932), ГАЗО:3952/1/20, p. 241; "Die Opportunisten und Saboteure der Getreidefront wurden aus dem Komsomol entfernt...." Jungsturm (Organ des Halbstädter Rayonskomitees... Nr. 18), Halbstadt (27 November 1932), ГАЗО:3952/1/20, p. 247.

12. "Protokoll № 55...." ГАЗО:3452/1/18, p. 169; Redekopp, Es war die Heimat, p. 74.

13. "Ausländisches," MR, 30 March 1932, pp. 6f; "План мобилизации средств...." ГАЗО:1429/1/47, pp. 39, 151; "Акт...." ГАЗО:1429/1/47, pp. 69f.

14. Redekopp, Es war die Heimat, pp. 73f; "Das ZK LKJVU fordert von allen Gebiets= und Rayonskomitees, von allen Komsomolzen der Stadt und des Dorfes...." Jungsturm (Organ des Halbstädter Rayonskomitees... Nr. 18), Halbstadt (27 November 1932)," ГАЗО:3952/1/20, p. 247.

15. "Auszug aus dem Beschluss des Gebietsvollzugskomitees und Gebietskomitees der KP/d.S./d.U...." ГАЗО:1429/1/32, p. 1; "An alle Dorfräte...." ГАЗО:3452/1/32, p. 165; "Protokoll № 29...." ГАЗО:3452/1/24, p. 150; "В ПИК УССР ЦКВКП....." ГАЗО:862/1/14, pp. 58ff; "Всем пред. Колхозов...." ГАЗО:2953/1/10, pp. 98ff; "Секретарям ячеек КП(б)У Молочанского района," ГАЗО:3452/1/24, p. 163.

16. "Auszug aus dem Beschluss...." ГАЗО:3952/1/20, p. 211; "Waldheim," MR, 11 January 1933, p. 7; Redekopp, Es war die Heimat, pp. 73f.

17. "Nikolaipol, Kreis Jekaterinoslaw...." DB, 19 October 1932, p. 4; "Protokoll № 64...." ГАЗО:3482/1/18, p. 182; "Protokoll № 44...." ГАЗО:3452/1/9, p. 41.

18. "Aus dem Chortitzer Rayon," DB, 8 June 1932, p. 4; "Schönwiese bei Alexandrowsk," DB, 7 June 1933, p. 4.

19. "Протокол...." ГАЗО:3452/1/28, pp. 17f; "An den Ohrloffer Dorfrat," ГАЗО: 3482/1/13, pp. 14, 23.

20. "Obligatorische Verordnung...." ГАЗО:3452/1/28, p. 136; Unruh, "Bericht XXIII-A," 3 March 1931, p. 3.

21. "Wir schreiten stark dem Hunger entgegen," DB, 29 April 1931, p. 4; "Oak Bluff, Man.," MR, 27 July 1932, p. 6; "Aus dem Briefe eines jungen Mannes," DB, 15 June 1932, p. 3.

22. "Aufbau? (Eingesandt von A. Kröker)," MR, 17 February 1932, p. 11; Unruh, "Bericht XLII," 17 February 1932, pp. 1ff; "Deutsches Konsulate...." in Zlepko, Der Ukrainische Hunger Holocaust, pp. 175ff.

23. Unruh, "Deutsches Rotes Kreuz," 8 November 1932, pp. 1ff; Unruh, "Hilfwerk-Notizen," 20 April 1933, pp. 1ff.

24. Buchsweiler, Volksdeutsche in der Ukraine, pp. 64ff; Unruh, "Bericht LX," 12, January 1933, pp. 4ff.

25. Unruh, "Abshcrift," 29 June 1933, pp. 1ff; Unruh, Fugung und Fuhrung im Mennonitischen Welthilfswerk, 1920-1933, pp. 57ff.

26. "Протокол №...." ГАЗО:235/2/62, pp. 14f; Ewald Ammende, "Abschrift. Ausschuss der Europäischen Nationalitätenkongresse," 27 June 1933, p. 1.

27. Buchsweiler, Volksdeutsche in der Ukraine, pp. 47ff, 55ff;

28. "Deutsches Generalkonsulat Charkow...." in Zlepko, Der Ukrainische Hunger Holocaust, pp. 50ff; "Bericht über 'Die Notlage in der Ukraine' von einem Vertrauensmann in Charkow...." in Zlepko, Der Ukrainische Hunger Holocaust, pp. 160ff.

29. "Deutsches Konsulat...." in Zlepko, Der Ukrainische Hunger Holocaust, pp. 246f, 250f; "Deutsches Generalkonsulat Charkow...." in Zlepko, Der Ukrainische Hunger Holocaust, pp. 305ff.

30. "Protokoll № 63...." ГАЗО:3482/1/18, p. 180; "Ausländisches," MR, 15 February 1933, p. 12; "Blumenort, Russland," MR, 31 August 1932, p. 7.

31. "Schöneberg, Chortitzer Wolost," DB, 22 February 1933, p. 5; "Gruss mit Zephanja 1,7," MR, 28 February 1934, pp. 6f; "Aus dem Halbstadter Rayon," DB, 1 June 1932, p. 3; Rempel, Liebenau, p. 133.

32. "Aus der Geschichte von Wernersdorf, Molotschna, Sued-Russland," pp. 60ff; "Alexanderkrone, Sagradowka," DB, 29 March 1933, p. 5.

33. "Blumenort, Russland," MR, 31 August 1932, p. 7.

34. "Chortitza," DB, 31 May 1933, p. 4; "Ausländisches," MR, 22 March 1933, pp. 6f; "Protokoll № 15...." ГАЗО:3452/1/24, p. 75.

35. "Chortitza, Ukraine. (Aus einem Privatbrief)," DB, 18 May 1930, p. 4; "Schardau, Russland," MR, 30 November 1932, p. 7.

36. "Schöneberg, Chortitzer Wolost," DB, 22 February 1933, p. 5; "Bilder aus Chortitza," DB, 26 July 1933, pp. 3f.

37. "Schönwiese bei Alexandrowsk," DB, 15 November 1933, p. 4; "Bolschewistischen Gruß dem Tressen der Finanzstürmer!," Finanzstürmer, Halbstadt Ukraine (30 September 1933) p. 1, ГАЗО:1429/1/47, p. 36.

38. "Vom Sterben. Chortitza, Ukraina," DB, 26 April 1933, p. 4; "Russland," MR, 14 June 1933, p. 6.

39. The data for the table is from the following: "Chortitza," CGWD:146/1/238-460; "Blumenfeld (Nikopol)," CGWD:152/7/273- 301; "Gnadental (Safiewka)," CGWD:147/1/572-622; "Neudorf (Pjatichatki)," CGWD: 150/5/1-39;"Rosenort (Kronau)," CGWD:148/2/487-527; "Reinfeld (Kronau)," CGWD:149/4/374-40; "Felsenbach (Pjatichatki)," CGWD:150/5/101-166; "Steinfeld (Kronau)," CGWD:154/8/596-654; Unruh, "Bericht LXVI-A," 26 July 1933, pp. 1ff; "Alexanderkrone (Kronau)," CGWD:154/9/1-19; "Friedensfeld (Kronau)," CGWD:154/9/ 43-72; "Blumenort (Kronau)," CGWD:154/9/73-99; "Altonau (Kronau)," CGWD:149/4/ 264-301; "Neu- Schönsee (Kronau)," CGWD:149/4/448-476; "Neu-Chortitza (Pjatichatki)," CGWD:150/5/167-218; "Alexanderfeld (Kronau)," CGWD:146/1/43-82; "Tiega (Kronau)," CGWD:148/3/103-140; "Ohrloff (Kronau)," CGWD:149/4/401-447; "Schönau (Kronau)," CGWD:154/8/539-596; "Neu-Halbstadt (Kronau)," CGWD:149/4/231-263.

40. "Blumenfeld (Nikopol)," CGWD:152/7/273-301; "Chortitza," CGWD:146/1/238-460; "Gnadental (Safiewka)," CGWD:147/1/572-622; "Grünfeld (Kriwoj-Rog)," CGWD: 150/5/286-351; "Tiega (Kronau)," CGWD:148/3/103-140.

41. Unruh, "Bericht LXVI-A," 26 July 1933, pp. 1ff; "Alexanderkrone, Russland, den 21. Mai," MR, 12 July 1933, p. 7.

42. Unruh, "Bericht LXVI-A," 26 July 1933, pp. 1ff; "Bilder aus Chortitza," DB, 26 July 1933, pp. 3f.

43. Stephen Wheatcroft, "The 1932-1933 Famine in Ukraine: The Scale of Mortality and the Causes of the Famine." A paper presented at the University of Toronto, March 1990; Conquest, The Harvest of Sorrow, pp. 302-306.

Chapter V

* * * * *

Conclusion

Assessing the impact of collectivization, dekulakization, and the famine on the Soviet Mennonite community in Ukraine and the Crimea is no easy task. One reason is the scope of this work: determining what common experiences were shared by thousands of Mennonites scattered across Ukraine and the Crimea is often difficult given that what happened in one Mennonite village was often very different from what occurred in a neighbouring settlement, let alone a village in another region of Ukraine or the Crimea. Another factor that makes the task of assessment so difficult is that there were a multitude of Mennonite responses, and not one collective Mennonite reaction to what was going on in the early 1930s. The information found in archival sources altered and in some cases destroyed some of the preconceived notions of how Mennonites collectively reacted to and dealt with the chaotic and brutal events of the early 1930s. In this respect, this dissertation challenges the existing stereotypical characterization of Soviet Mennonites as only the passive victims of Stalin's collectivization and dekulakization programs. It is true that many Mennonites in Ukraine and the Crimea in the early 1930s were victims, if not martyrs for their faith, but the Mennonite experience during this period can no longer be interpreted and understood exclusively in terms of Mennonite martyrology; the Soviet Mennonite experience was far more complex, diverse, and disturbing than this.

What then are some of the conclusions of this study? Of all of the policies implemented by the Stalinist regime during the early 1930s, dekulakization had the greatest impact on the Mennonite community in Ukraine and the Crimea. As was discussed in Chapter II, Mennonites epitomized the definition of kulak, and as a result, Mennonites on a per capita basis were dekulakized at higher rates than Ukrainians or Russians. The exile, imprisonment, and execution of thousands of Mennonite kulaks and clergymen resulted in the decapitation of the Mennonite leadership and destroyed many Mennonite settlements. Prior to the 1930s, no government policy or catastrophic event had such a destructive impact on the Mennonite community as did dekulakization.

Liquidating kulaks and enemies of the state was not the only policy which wreaked havoc on the Soviet Mennonite community at this time. The raison d'etre of dekulakization was to ensure that the government plan of collectivizing the entire countryside would be successful and occur ahead of schedule. The dekulakization of their economic, political, and religious leaders left Mennonites stunned, disoriented, and in many cases willing to sign on as collective farm members in order to avoid dekulakization. The collectivization of their farms forced Mennonites to integrate into the larger Ukrainian and Russian community. Collectivization forced Mennonites to live in new state-sponsored communities which included Ukrainians, Russians, Germans, and Jews, and which resulted in the erosion of traditions and characteristics that had previously distinguished the Mennonites as a unique religious minority.

Who bears responsibility for the break up and destruction of the Mennonite community in Ukraine and the Crimea between 1930 and 1933? Although much of the blame for what happened can be attributed to Stalin and his ruling elite, there are others who must also bear responsibility for what happened. Various segments of society, including members of the administrative bureaucracy, the 25,000ers, and the Communist Party also provided much of the impetus behind the dekulakization and collectivization campaigns, even within the Mennonite community itself. While it is true that there was a lack of widespread Mennonite support for the government's dekulakization and collectivization programs, there were certainly some Mennonites who actively promoted and implemented these programs within their communities from the outset. By becoming involved in local soviets, collective farm executives, Soviet-sponsored newspapers, Communist party cells, and government agencies, Mennonite bureaucrats drafted, signed, and carried out directives and policies both for the benefit of, and to the detriment of, their coreligionists. Working at every level within the local party and regional government bureaucracy, Mennonites organized collective farms, issued tax and grain quota levies, organized anti-religious meetings and Pioneer/Komsomol groups, approved of the closure of churches, expropriated property, land, and equipment, prepared the quotas and characterizations of those who were to be dekulakized, and imprisoned and exiled members of the local population. In this respect Mennonites who worked for the Soviet regime played a key role in the final destruction of the Mennonite community and an important role in determining how the Mennonite countryside would be socialized and administered by the new collective farms.

What was their rationale for doing so? Regrettably, the available memoirs and biographies seldom explain what motivated Mennonite officials to work for the state. It is clear from available documentation that the Soviet government was successful in using persuasion and propaganda to recruit some Mennonites to work as soldiers in the class war against the kulak and as builders of a new socialist countryside. The government's promise of economic and social advancement (upward mobility) within a new socialist state motivated other Mennonites to sign on. Prior to the late 1920s, upward mobility within the Mennonite commonwealth was usually determined by a person's economic, social, educational, or religious status: those who owned land or businesses, belonged to the Mennonite religious leadership (ministers and elders), came from influential families, or obtained higher education and worked as teachers or nurses, could be assured of respect from their coreligionists and often found it easier to advance within the social, political, and religious hierarchies of their community than their less fortunate, landless Mennonite coreligionists. After Stalin's rise to power in the mid-1920s the ground rules for upward mobility were suddenly turned upside down. Now the criteria of land ownership, economic prosperity, and religious affiliation became the criteria for determining who were the enemies of the state; moreover, anyone, whether landless or wealthy, who had participated in the *Selbstschutz* or who was accused of having supported the White, German, or Austrian armies was branded a counterrevolutionary and usually dekulakized. On the other hand, Mennonites who had no land, educational qualifications, religious affiliations, or known counterrevolutionary past were welcomed within government-sanctioned agencies and could expect to improve their economic and social status if they supported the state. For those Mennonites who sought influential positions within the collective farm executive committees, the district educational supervisory committees, Communist Party cells, and government agencies such as the CVP, ECDS, DEC, MTS, RLDC, and WPIC, the promise of improving their economic and social status was undoubtedly an important factor in their decision to support the government and its policies.

That so many Mennonites began working for the state at the same time indicates that coercion was an important motivational factor. For many Mennonites, helping the government in implementing its dekulakization and collectivization policies was a matter of self-preservation. They assumed that if they did not work for the state, they and their families would eventually be branded as kulaks and suffer the same fate as other Mennonites who were dekulakized: that is, imprisonment, exile, or execution. They hoped that their cooperation in performing the deeds of the state would afford them some protection from being labelled as enemies of the state. In this respect, the state's dekulakization and collectivization programs succeeded in turning Mennonites against each other on behalf of a political cause that now became more important than the religious, social, and ethnic ideals that had united Mennonites for more than two hundred years.

That a segment of the Mennonite population actively supported and participated in the government's dekulakization and collectivization campaigns in various capacities also points to an important development in Mennonite history. As was briefly discussed in Chapter II, this was one of the first times in Mennonite history that such a large number of Mennonites ignored their historical Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition of nonparticipation in the government and worked in government agencies to orchestrate and implement the government's dekulakization and collectivization policies against Ukrainians, Russians, Germans, and fellow Mennonites. Mennonites were not only the victims of violence, but now, uncharacteristically and all too frequently, the perpetrators of violence.

This is not to say, however, that every Mennonite who joined the local soviet, Communist party, or government agency would eventually and inevitably have the blood of fellow Mennonites on his or her hands. There were certainly some Mennonite officials who endeavoured to reduce the drastic impact of government policies on their communities; for example, there were a number of Mennonite chairmen of collective farms and local soviets who were allegedly too lenient with local kulaks, were subsequently vilified in local newspapers, and eventually removed from their posts after being accused of sympathizing with the kulaks. In this respect, the extent to which these officials could help fellow Mennonites under their jurisdiction was often limited, given the widespread proclivity of local activists and Communist party members to monitor and condemn the activities of officials who did not appear to toe the party line.

Like so many Ukrainian, Russian, and German inhabitants in Ukraine and the Crimea at this time, the majority of Mennonites were not local officials, Communist Party members, or bureaucrats; most Mennonites were the helpless and brutalized victims of Stalin's "revolution from above" -- a revolution where large segments of the population were either imprisoned, exiled, executed, or forced to join local collective farms. Some Mennonites tried to resist the revolution by destroying their property and livestock (self-dekulakization), collecting money to pay the additional taxes levied on Mennonite pastors and churches, participating in Mennonite religious life despite government prohibitions, challenging the authority of local officials, migrating to the larger urban centres, emigrating to more favourable regions of the USSR, or committing suicide. Perhaps the most impressive demonstration of Mennonite resistance occurred at the very beginning of the dekulakization and collectivization campaigns when thousands of Mennonites descended on Moscow in late 1929 in a last-ditch attempt to emigrate to the West. Government officials were often taken aback by such acts of resistance from this pacifistic religious group and occasionally backed off from implementing their dekulakization and collectivization programs. In the vast majority of cases, however, Mennonite acts of defiance resulted in imprisonment or a trip on a red wagon to one of the country's exile settlements.

Between 1928 and 1933 thousands of Mennonites in Ukraine and the Crimea were taken away in red wagons. That so many Mennonite kulaks, religious leaders, and alternative service participants were imprisoned or exiled resulted in the decimation of the Mennonite community and the exploitation of Mennonite labour in the nation's prisons and gulags. Regarded as expendable slave labourers, most Mennonite prisoners and exiles toiled in inhumane, unbearable conditions which not unexpectedly resulted in high mortality rates. What is surprising is that so many Mennonite prisoners and resettlers survived the worst of the Soviet penal system. Some accomplished this by escaping from the camps and prisons. Others endured their wretched circumstances only because of the food parcels and money that they received from their relatives in the West. Many found the will to survive in their Christian faith, finding consolation from scripture and trusting that God had a purpose and a plan for everything that happened to them. Without Mennonite religious leaders to help them, Mennonite exiles and prisoners also nurtured their religious faith on their own terms, in new Christian fellowships which included Russians, Ukrainians, and ethnic minorities.

Was there any benefit to be had from imprisoning and exiling the alleged enemies of the state? Some revisionist historians have suggested that the deportation of kulaks to exile camps (involuntary mobility) had some positive benefits for Soviet society in that it allowed for the transfer of labour to those regions of the nation that were in the throes of industrialization and in desperate need of workers.[1] As was noted in Chapter II, a small number of Mennonites who were exiled outside of Ukraine and the Crimea were eventually able to obtain work in urban and industrial regions near the gulags. From all accounts, however, this was a small minority of the Mennonite exile population. Many Mennonite exiles died in the camps performing slave labour on behalf of the state, and of those who survived, some eventually made their way back to Ukraine or fled to other areas of the USSR where there was a greater possibility of escaping to the West. Consequently, the extent to which there were any long-term, positive industrialization benefits arising from the involuntary mobility of Mennonite exiles was limited.

The dislocation, chaos, and terror initiated by the government's dekulakization and collectivization campaigns also had profound economic, political, social, religious, and cultural repercussions on the Mennonite community. In terms of their economic impact, the dekulakization and collectivization campaigns stripped Mennonites of their economic privileges and status, and left most of them destitute well before famine conditions began to appear in the spring and summer of 1932. Extortionist grain expropriation campaigns, outrageous taxes, widespread confiscation of land and property, and forced collectivization had depleted nearly all of the available wealth that the Mennonites still possessed in the late 1920s. Without property, money, or food, thousands of Mennonites were forced to live in harsh and inhuman conditions on collective farms in Ukraine and the Crimea and in prisons and exile settlements scattered across the USSR. These Mennonites were forced to perform slave labour and live on parsimonious rations until fatal illness, starvation, or execution provided a final release from their misery. That many more Mennonites did not die was due only to the relief efforts of thousands of Mennonites in North America and Europe.

Within the sphere of politics and local self-government, Mennonites lost the power to determine their political fate when the regime took decisive steps in 1928 to gain complete control over the administrative and political affairs of villages. By imposing new rules on village commune meetings, increasing the authority of village soviets and government agencies, and replacing recently imprisoned, exiled, or executed Mennonite political and religious leaders with loyal bureaucrats and party members, the government succeeded in eliminating the traditional, semidemocratic political system that existed in the Mennonite settlements. This liquidation of the traditional Mennonite political and religious leadership meant that the community no longer had a united voice with which to express its political concerns to officials in various levels of government. Denied the most basic of political freedoms, Mennonites in Ukraine and the Crimea were now required to follow the arbitrary orders of government-appointed officials whose policies were often motivated by self-interest and Stalinist fanaticism rather than the best interests of local inhabitants.

Dekulakization also eliminated the prevailing social hierarchies that existed within the Mennonite colonies. Previously, economic status, familial ties, and religious affiliation were the factors that determined the social class of each individual. In no time dekulakization destroyed the prevailing class system. No longer at the pinnacle of their class system, Mennonite kulaks found themselves at the bottom of a social hierarchy that has suddenly expanded to include not only Mennonites, but also Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, and ethnic minorities. At the same time, dekulakization removed those social and ethnic barriers that had previously separated most Mennonites from their Ukrainian, Russian, and Jewish neighbours.

Notwithstanding the elimination of traditional Mennonite political and social hierarchies, dekulakization and collectivization also facilitated the emergence of new social and political hierarchies in Mennonite-populated regions. The members of these new hierarchies, which included Mennonites, Ukrainians, Russians, Germans, and Jews, were chosen and remained in power because they ostensibly were the spokespersons for the village poor, had connections with the Communist party, or were willing to follow the party line. New criteria such as landlessness, allegiance to the state, and membership in the Communist party determined where the ordinary peasant fit within the new political and social hierarchies (i.e., kulak, collectivized peasant, activist, and Communist Party member). Whether or not they approved of these new hierarchies, ordinary Mennonites were required to integrate into them as quickly as possible.

Forced integration into the larger Ukrainian and Russian population also deprived Mennonites of their control over how their children were educated. The government's decision to expel Mennonite teachers who refused to teach antireligious propaganda in the classrooms also served to weaken the social cohesiveness that previously existed in Mennonite communities. Until the late 1920s, Mennonite schools proved to be an effective means of promoting and maintaining Mennonite religious traditions, identity, and culture within the various colonies. Between 1928 and 1933, however, the role of Mennonite schools changed dramatically as school teachers were now required to inculcate the regime's ideals and antireligious views into the minds of Mennonite children. Mennonite children and teachers were also forced to renounce the traditions and beliefs of their families, report the names of those who were still espousing such beliefs and traditions, expose the identity of anyone who in any way qualified as a kulak, and participate in government-sponsored activities and groups (Pioneers and Komsomols). Although some Mennonite parents and teachers tried to resist this government assault on their children, the threat of fines, imprisonment, or exile compelled many Mennonites to allow their children to participate in the Soviet government's education program.

Local government endeavours to rid the countryside of Mennonite religious leaders and institutions also helped to sever ties that had once bound the community together. The internment, exile, and execution of large numbers of Mennonite clergymen, the conversion of Mennonite churches into clubs, theatres, or collective farm buildings, combined with the government's attempts to eliminate all Mennonite religious services, threatened to eliminate religious and cultural awareness within Mennonite settlements. With their religious and ethnic identity now under attack, and with their religious leaders and churches gone, Mennonites -- particularly Mennonite women -- often took it upon themselves to preserve and pass on their religious faith to their children by holding secret prayer meetings and worship services where they would not be harassed. Although such efforts to "keep the faith" were often successful, there was always the ever-present danger of Soviet atheistic creeds supplanting Mennonite religious beliefs in the minds and hearts of younger Mennonites.

Government policies also put significant pressure on the Mennonite family. Traditionally an important promoter of Mennonite faith and culture, Mennonite families suffered severe hardships and losses between 1928 and 1933. During these years, many families were split apart and reduced in number when incarceration, exile, starvation, illness, or execution resulted in the loss of individual family members. Moreover, the transfer of large numbers of Mennonite families from privately owned farms to state-controlled collectives marked the end of the economic independence of the Mennonite family farm in Ukraine and the Crimea. It was the state and not the family unit that now determined where and how the family's members were to live, where they were to work, what they were allowed to earn, how their expropriated land and property was to be used, and in what political and social activities they were allowed to participate. Having been forced to surrender control over its destiny to the state, the Mennonite family was now vulnerable to the arbitrary decisions of the state in virtually all matters. It is thus not surprising that when drought conditions developed in some regions of Ukraine and the Crimea in 1932-1933 there was very little that the average collectivized Mennonite family could do to counter its effects.

And what place does the famine of 1932-1933 have in the collective experience of Mennonites in Ukraine and the Crimea? The efforts of internal grain commissions and search brigades who endeavoured to take every kernel of wheat from the countryside certainly meant that some collectivized Mennonites had to beg for their food or consume whatever they found to be edible in order to survive. There was also no mercy for those caught with grain; they were imprisoned, exiled, or executed. Yet, despite suffering and premature death in a number of Mennonite settlements during 1932-1933, the famine in

Ukraine did not have the same ramifications for collectivized Mennonites as it had for collectivized Ukrainian peasants. The available documentation appears to indicate that the percentage of Mennonites who died as a result of the famine conditions in both Ukraine and the Crimea was lower, and in some cases dramatically lower than the mortality rate often cited for the Ukrainian peasantry. This was primarily due to the extensive aid and monetary support that Soviet Mennonites received from their relatives and friends in the West as well as the German government and foreign relief agencies. Other factors which contributed to the lower Mennonite mortality rates include the high incidence of dekulakization in some settlements (which had previously drastically reduced the Mennonite population) and the fact that famine conditions did not exist in a number of Mennonite-populated areas. In this respect, it is quite apparent that previous interpretive analyses of the famine do not adequately explain the Mennonite experience in Ukraine in 1932-1933.

Mortality rates also help to clear up any misconceptions about whether the famine resulted in an act of genocide against the Mennonite community in Ukraine. The lower mortality rate for the Mennonite community, the lack of evidence that there was a concerted policy on the past of the Soviet regime to exterminate all Soviet Mennonites during dekulakization or the famine, and the evidence that the Soviet regime had the capability of destroying the Mennonite presence (as occurred after World War II), together indicate that the famine of 1932-1933 did not constitute an act of genocide against the Mennonite community. In acknowledging this, there is no attempt to dismiss the culpability of the Soviet government for what happened in 1932 and 1933. The policies of the Soviet regime collectively constitute a heinous crime perpetrated against the inhabitants of the Ukrainian republic, and thus the genocide theory may be relevant in discussing Ukrainian nationalism, politics, and culture. This theory, however, does not provide an adequate explanation of what happened to Soviet Mennonites in Ukraine in 1932-1933.

The cumulative effect of dekulakization and collectivization on the Mennonite community in Ukraine and the Crimea was the severance of many of the ties that had bound Soviet Mennonites to their identity, their sense of peoplehood, and their past. Although a better-than-average harvest in the summer and fall of 1933, a decrease in the number of grain requisition campaigns in 1934, and a drastic decrease in the death rates in some Mennonite villages in 1934 instilled hope in some Mennonites that some of their ties to tradition and history could be reestablished, this was not to be.[2] In 1936, a new reign of oppression and inhumanity commonly referred to as the "Great Terror and Purge" would dominate the lives of Soviet Mennonites until the outbreak of World War II. During this new cycle of terror and brutality, large segments of the Mennonite population in Ukraine and the Crimea would again be subject to imprisonment, exile, and execution. Many of those who survived this terror and were allowed to remain in Ukraine and the Crimea were later forcibly deported to western Siberia and Central Asia in 1941-1942 after the German *Wehrmacht* invaded Ukraine in June of 1941. The Soviet regime justified the evacuation of thousands of Mennonites and other ethnic Germans on the allegation that the German minority in Ukraine and the Crimea had been and would continue collaborating with the Nazis and acting as a German fifth column behind Soviet lines. Some Mennonites and ethnic Germans who were not evacuated by the Soviets and remained in the Nazi-occupied zones did collaborate with the Nazis and were allowed to migrate to Germany when the German army began its retreat in 1943-1944. Although a number of these Soviet Mennonites emigrated to North and South America after the war, many other Mennonites were repatriated to the Soviet Union. Accused of collaborating with the enemy, the Mennonite repatriates were eventually executed, imprisoned, or exiled to special settlements. Those who survived this ordeal were released in 1955 when the Soviet regime granted a general amnesty to ethnic Germans accused of collaborating with the Nazis. The released repatriates were allowed to return to their families who had been relocated to various regions of the Soviet Union, but they were not allowed to return to Ukraine or the Crimea, or to seek compensation for the loss of personal property. In new surroundings and with very little property of their own, these Soviet Mennonites began to rebuild their lives that had been so disrupted by the events of the previous thirty years.[3]

In the decades following World War II, the Soviet Mennonite community never regained the sense of identity and community that was once commonplace in Mennonite colonies across Ukraine and the Crimea prior to 1928. Through the dekulakization and collectivization campaigns, the purges, the war, and the forced resettlement, Ukrainian and Crimean Mennonites lost the sense of peoplehood that had developed out of their economic, social, political, religious, and cultural traditions and institutions. This is not to say that the Soviet Mennonite community in the 1950's and 1960's did not have its own understanding of what it meant to be a Mennonite; Mennonites living in the post-Stalinist era had their own sense of religious consciousness and Mennonite identity, but this sense of consciousness and identity developed in response to their new environment rather than according to the precedents established by their Mennonite forebears. In this respect, the period between

1928 and 1933 proved to be one of the most important watersheds in the history of the Mennonite people in the Soviet Union. It was an era that marked not only the beginning of the end of the Mennonite sojourn in Ukraine and the Crimea, but also the end of a Mennonite community that had its roots in prerevolutionary Russia.

Endnotes for Chapter V

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"Blumenort (Kronau)," container 154, reel 9, images 73-99.

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